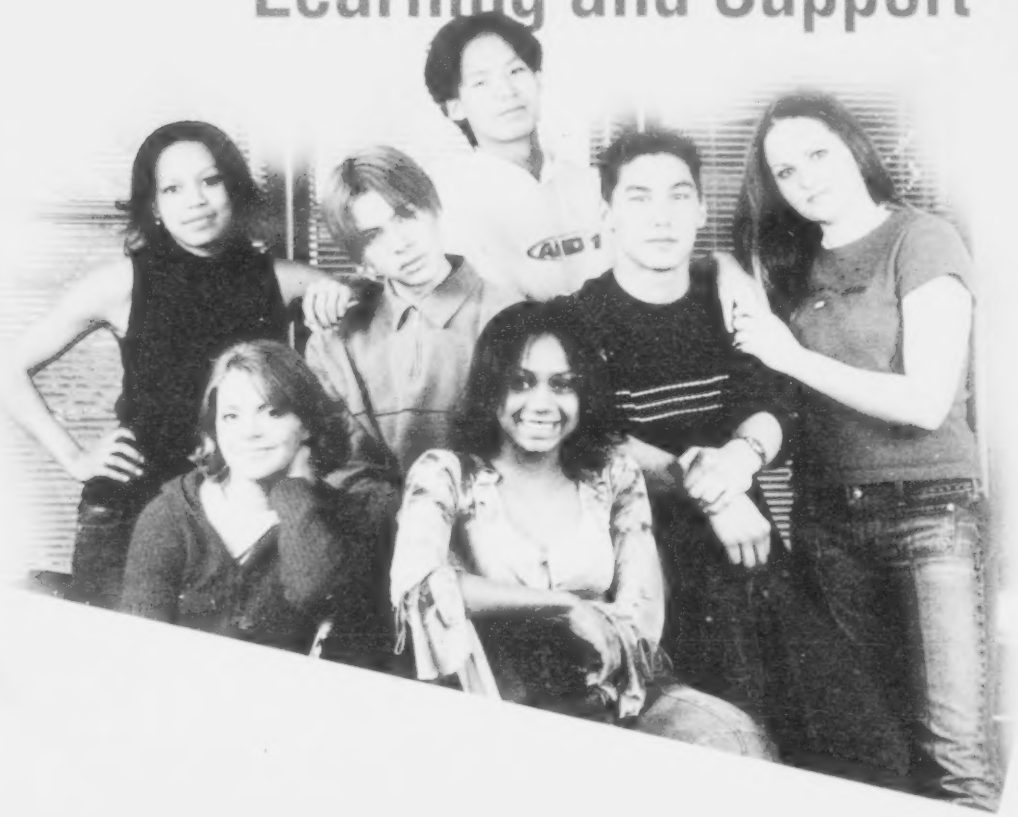
Saskatchewan
Learning

Saskatchewan Centennial 2005

Toward School^PLUS

EMPOWERING HIGH SCHOOLS

As Communities of Learning and Support



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Empowering Saskatchewan High Schools

At the heart of the provincial education system in Saskatchewan is a commitment to providing quality learning opportunities and benefits for *every* young person. The aim is to support the development of the whole person to achieve his or her full potential and to become a caring and contributing citizen. Today this commitment presents new challenges as well as opportunities. Significant changes are having an impact on the lives of children and youth on what and how learning is supported; and, who should be involved. These changes include: social and economic influences on the lives and needs of young people, the emergence of a knowledge-based society, advances in technology to support learning, and new knowledge about how learning occurs. They require educators to rethink traditional approaches to teaching and learning with those who share the responsibility of learning and life success.

The *SchoolPLUS* vision calls for transformational changes in Saskatchewan's high schools. The focus is on becoming more open, responsive, and relevant in meeting student needs to ensure high quality learning opportunities and outcomes for all. A developmental change process is underway across the province focused on strengthening the capacity of schools to:

- make consistent use of research-based, effective practices;
- develop enhanced leadership capabilities;
- adopt Community Education philosophy and practices; and,
- collect and use assessment data to inform decision making and continuous improvement.

Challenges facing young people today as well as changing societal expectations of education, have led to responsive and innovative examples of Saskatchewan high schools transforming to be more effective at meeting student needs. Experience and literature reveal the need to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of all high schools through systematic and collaborative actions.

Toward SchoolPlus: Empowering High Schools As Communities of Learning and Support provides a framework for staff, students, families, human service providers and community members to work together to undertake the journey to *SchoolPLUS*. To guide the journey, this document offers a common vision, principles, goals, an overview of effective practices, and comprehensive literature references. This Policy and Program framework informs high school change and improvement processes. Its purpose is to assist high schools as they build on their strengths as communities of learning and support, where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Objectives

The objectives of the Policy and Program framework are to assist high school members to:

- ensure high quality learning opportunities and outcomes *for all* young people;
- create holistic, responsive, empowering, and relevant learning opportunities and environments that consistently model effective practices through:
  - curriculum implementation;
  - instruction and assessment strategies;
  - provision of supports and services;
  - shared leadership; and,
  - responsive high school policies and structures;
- focus on youth engagement and leadership development;
- adopt Community Education philosophy and practices, thereby recognizing and responding to the diverse strengths and needs of students, their families, and their communities; and,
- provide a holistic array of human services and supports linked to the high school or delivered out of school to meet the diverse needs of students and members of their family and community.

This framework, *Empowering High Schools*, is not intended as a prescribed formula for transforming schools. The unique situations, needs, and strengths of individual schools and communities require that school community members respond together to challenges and opportunities. This guide will not be implemented so much as reinvented by each high school that uses it.

A Historical Context

In 1989 a review of the Community Schools Program noted:

> ...it is important to consider the possibility of expansion of the Community Schools Program into rural Saskatchewan and other smaller urban centres where the need for such a program is just as great as it is in the larger urban centres. The expansion into a high school community school model should also be considered.

In 1994 the High School Review Advisory Committee proposed the following foundation for high schools (also accepted in principle by the provincial government):

> ...Secondary schools are based on the recognition of and appreciation for both the commonalities and diversities among individuals. Secondary schools are based on the belief

that all students can achieve personal excellence. Secondary schools are based on the belief that an understanding of the relationship between their own lives, their community and the global community is essential for all students.

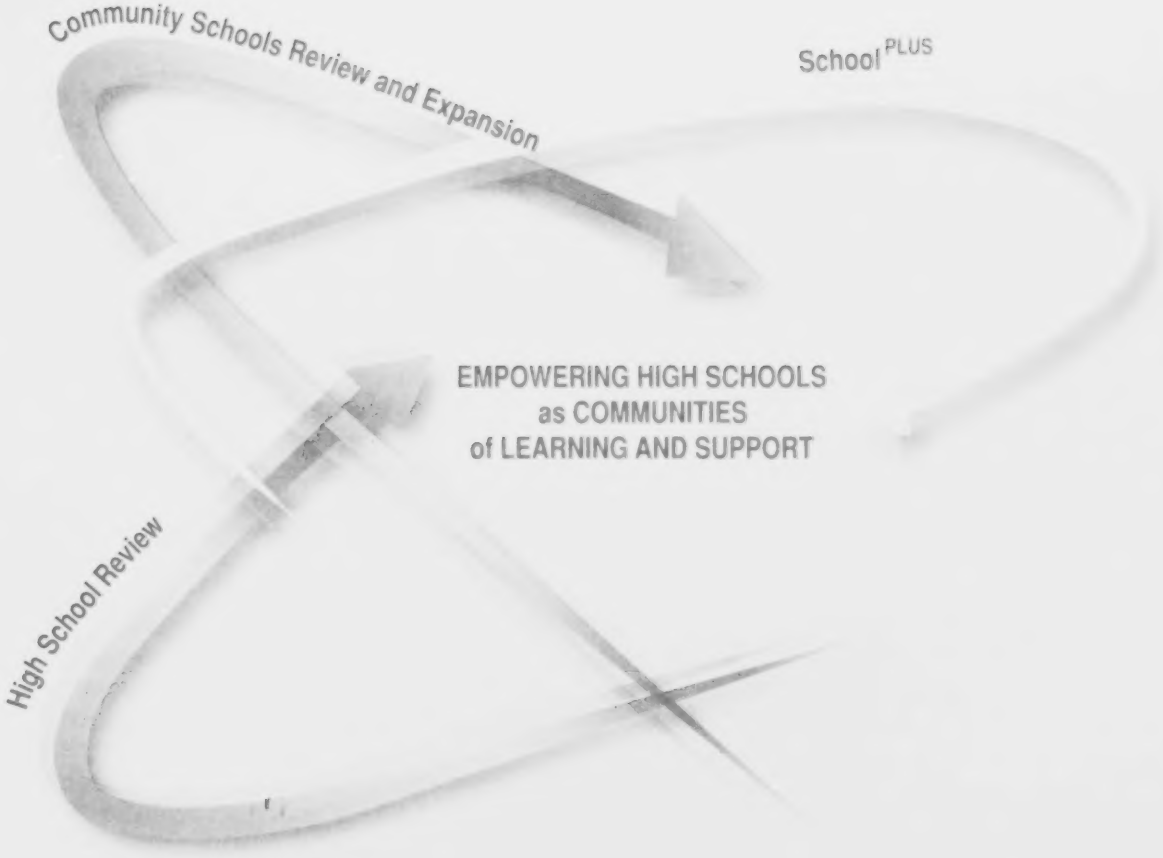
School^{PLUS}: In 2001 the Role of the School Task Force reported:

> ...there is real need for high schools to reflect on their programs and program delivery models from the point of view of the changing character and needs of their students. A new attitude and culture needs to be promoted in secondary education that is risk taking, that does not see making mistakes as organizationally fatal; that believes we can learn from mistakes, with the recognition that they are essential to a healthy institutional culture and the responsive learning organization. (Please See Appendix B for recommendations related to high schools).

School^{PLUS} In 2002, the Provincial Response to the *Role of the School Task Force Final Report* noted:

> ...the recommendations related to secondary schools called for greater diversity in high school program design and greater responsiveness to the needs of students and their communities. The Government of Saskatchewan agrees that secondary, as well as elementary school programming, must be driven by the learning needs of children and youth.

The illustration on the following page demonstrates the historical influences that have shaped this Policy and Program framework.



Looking at our past as a collective allows us to build a solid plan for the future. This Policy and Program framework combines a strong foundation of research with past accomplishments and lived lessons in high schools.

Since 1989, reviews and recommendations have challenged and invited those engaged in high schools, (administrators, community members, staff, families, and students), to:

- build on strengths;
- change that which needs to be changed;
- learn from ongoing experiences; and,
- continually move forward to share a remarkable future.

Challenges and Opportunities

There are many reasons for empowering high schools to become communities of learning and support. The challenges and opportunities outlined below provide compelling rationale for strengthening the capacity of Saskatchewan's secondary schools to meet the learning needs of all students.

1. The Diverse Needs of Young People

The publically funded education system is responsible for providing high quality learning opportunities and outcomes for all young people. Today, significant numbers of young people are experiencing barriers to learning and school success due to social, economic, psychological, and developmental factors in their lives. Realities such as family instability, poverty, racism and discrimination, and adolescent parenthood have a significant impact on their healthy development and ability to succeed in school, as well as on their future life choices and opportunities.

> ... education, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.
> (Arendt, 1961)

In addition, Saskatchewan's growing Aboriginal communities experiences disproportionate levels of poverty, unemployment and racism that negatively affect the educational and life success of children and young people.

To meet the needs of students, schools and supports must be more responsive, flexible, culturally affirming, and holistic. Traditional high school structure and culture based on a "one size fits all" model with an emphasis on the transmission of knowledge, often conflict with the intentions of Core Curriculum. Too often, the functioning of high schools is determined by institutional rules more concerned with control and compliance than with the needs of students and what is known about learning and quality instruction.

2. Enhanced Learning for All Students

Recent results from a number of provincial and national assessments of student learning reveal that there is uneven and incomplete adoption of the Saskatchewan Core Curriculum, and that Saskatchewan students are not achieving at the desired levels.

Saskatchewan student achievement trails the Canadian average in a number of areas and a relatively low percentage of students are performing at highest levels across subject areas. For example:

- in reading and writing, results are significantly lower than the Canadian profile, and the province's upper-level writing results for 16-year-olds are below the Canadian average;
- in social studies, the majority of Grade 7-9 students achieve Level 2 or lower on a 5 -level scale;
- in mathematics, fewer than expected are attaining levels of adequate performance; and,
- Aboriginal students continue to be over-represented among those students with low levels of achievement.

On a positive note, Saskatchewan students consistently demonstrate solid performance in science. Moreover, the commitment by the education system to equity is achieving results. In a recent international assessment, Saskatchewan students demonstrated superior performance when the data was aggregated to show the relationship between achievement and family socio-economic status. **(Human Resources Development and Statistics Canada, 2001)**

While there are significant strengths in the provincial education system, focused efforts are needed to support the consistent use of effective educational practices to promote enhanced learning for all.

> ... the feeling that comes from not being able to sink your teeth into understanding real life, from spending so much of your life in that grey muddle ground which schools inhabit . . .. We defend it to teenagers as a ticket to something else, rarely as worth much in itself . . .. Numbness is the way of coping . . . the majority of students has psychically dropped out. (Davis, 1990)

3. Youth Engagement

While the large majority of adolescents complete secondary school, the quality of their learning and performance varies significantly. Teachers often observe the pervasive withdrawal and passivity of too many students "going through the motions" in school-playing the game of seeing how little effort they can invest and still pass. Too often, high school students are disengaged and biding their time, enduring and drifting through school until they can enter the "real world."

Traditional high schools have changed far less than society or the young people of today. Often young people struggle to reconcile the complex relationships and responsibilities of their lives outside of school with their life in school where their realities are not fully considered and where they have the right to be heard.

Many students report life in high school to be characterized by widespread disengagement, apathy, boredom, and alienation.

4. Disconnect Between the Needs and Developmental Levels of Young People and Traditional Structures, Processes, and Culture of High Schools

Many difficulties that adolescents have in high school stem from a basic mismatch between adolescents' developmental needs and the kinds of experiences most high schools provide. Issues related to the organization, structure, and culture of high schools limit their ability to be *learner-centred* environments where experiential learning and learning for understanding are commonplace and where the needs, realities, and interests of students are supported. High schools need to become more responsive, relevant, and flexible. They need to model the most effective educational practices consistent with the purposes of education and the developmental needs of youth for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Moreover, the traditional structures and culture of high schools tend to contradict or conflict with the philosophy and purposes of Core Curriculum and its components such as the Adaptive Dimension. The curriculum reform process of the past two decades has focused on what to teach and how. The challenging learning program provided by Core calls for transactional approaches to learning and teaching and for schools to be more learner and learning-centred, more collaborative, interactive, and democratic.

5. Supporting a Prosperous Future

The success of young people in school is a strong predictor of their future success in life and their ability to participate as contributing citizens. Higher levels of educational achievement result in better jobs and a decrease in the likelihood of unemployment, involvement with the justice system and use of social services. Occupations requiring post-secondary education continue to grow at a faster rate than those requiring high school graduation or lower education. In Saskatchewan, about 29,000 (or 65%) of the almost 45,000 job opportunities forecast for 2000-05 are expected to require management skills or post-secondary education. *(2002 Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report)*

Increased education and training opportunities for all Saskatchewan people, particularly Aboriginal peoples are critical for the future. Forty percent of non-Aboriginal people 15 years and older have completed post-secondary education (certificate, diploma, or degree) compared to only 26.2% of Aboriginal peoples in the same age group.

In an increasingly diverse society, public education is the key institution with the capacity to nurture understanding and the value of diversity, and to foster active citizenship for a vibrant democracy.

Other generations believed that they had the luxury of preparing children to live in a society similar to their own. Ours is the first generation to have achieved the Socratic wisdom of knowing that we do not know the world in which our children will live. (Grieg, Pike, and Selby, 1987)

Rapid changes in society include:

- the growth of knowledge;
- the speed of information transfer;
- the increasing sophistication of technological advances; and,
- the complex social and economic changes facing individuals, families, and communities.

These changes require skills in communication, collaboration, higher order critical and creative thinking, as well as capacities such as flexibility for change, initiative, the practicality to implement new ideas, and the facility for independent learning and continuous growth.

6. Advances in Technology to Support Learning

New information and communication technologies are expanding opportunities for learning enormously. In the past, learning was largely dependent on close association with an expert who conveyed information at a specific time and in a specific sequence. Today, technology and e-learning offer learning opportunities that are multi-sensory, reflective, collaborative, and unconstrained by place, time, and formal structures.

Schools are losing their monopoly on learning... For youth today, the geography of learning stretches far beyond the physical space of the school. New technologies enable students to reach out and connect with other students, teachers and worlds. (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996)

A Program and Policy Framework

Vision

Saskatchewan high schools are communities of learning and support. They are open, inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of young people, their families, and the community they serve. They work to continuously improve the quality of learning experiences and outcomes for all students by providing engaging, challenging and culturally affirming curriculum, instructional practices and resources, caring and respectful environments, and committed and knowledgeable teachers.

> If student learning and engagement are truly at the heart of our endeavour, student voice may be its conscience. (Lee and Zimmerman, 1999)

High schools engage in learner-centred practices, educating for deep understanding where students can realize their personal best. Attentive to the developmental levels of youth, high schools create the conditions for students to work in ways that support their needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. High schools affirm the meaningful participation and involvement of students in their education by fostering and listening to their voices.

High schools serve as centres of learning and support in their communities, providing for a network of human services through relationships and partnerships with justice, social services, health and recreation agencies, and other community organizations.

Goals

The goals for high schools that contribute to achieving the vision include:

1. High Quality Learning Opportunities and Outcomes for All Students

All students have the opportunity and supports they require to achieve their full potential and succeed in school and in life. Learning programs are high quality, differentiated, culturally affirming, and academically challenging. Student achievement is high.

2. Youth Engagement

High schools engage all young people in learning that is meaningful and challenging.

They support dynamic, adaptive, and authentic teaching that is learning-centred and developmentally grounded. Learning is authentic in that it is active and experiential, in-depth, challenging, and collaborative.

3. Comprehensive and Responsive Services and Supports

High schools, as communities of learning and support, serve as centres for the delivery of responsive and holistic education and human services (health, justice, recreation, and social services). Schools form partnerships with other human service providers and supports are delivered out of or linked to the school.

4. Shared Responsibility

School staffs, youth, families, and community members share responsibility for the education and well-being of students. This is demonstrated by active youth, family, and community involvement in education planning, problem solving, and service delivery, and by a shared understanding of educational and community strengths, needs, concerns, and outcomes.

5. Equity, Respect, and Social/Cultural Harmony

School staff, students, families, and community members respect the dignity and experience of one another. There is equity, cultural understanding, and harmony in the school and the community that is readily evident in practice.

6. Every School is a Learning Community

Staff have opportunities for reflective practice and high quality professional development. By adopting Community Education philosophy, school staff engage with others and share capacity-building and leadership opportunities with students, families and community members. As a learning community, members work together to develop new competencies, strengthen practices, share responsibilities and improve outcomes.

None of us is as smart as all of us. (Phil Condit) (http://www.lp-associates.com/get_inspired.htm)

7. Continuous Assessment and Improvement

Staff, students, families, and community members engage in assessment practices to determine and measure intended outcomes, to use data to inform actions and decisions, celebrate milestones, and to realize goals through strong and effective practices.

Guiding Principles

Communities of learning ground their practices in an interlocking set of principles that reflect key commitments.

Principles provide a reference for addressing the most critical aspects of teaching, learning, and school life, rather than leaving difficult issues unspoken, ignored, or hidden. They create ongoing supports for reflection, review of practice, self-assessment, and evaluation. Discussions about these principles and conversations emerging from the experience of their practice can begin the process of building shared professional and community norms, values, and knowledge for continuous school improvement and renewal.

Understanding Community...
Community is a social space in which people associate for individual and collective interests. Community is also a social process marked by interaction and deliberation among people who share purposes, interests, capacities and fallibilities. Relationships and community grow out of shared values (like caring, participation, mutual respect, equality, and inclusiveness) and experiences. Diverse members choose to engage in common effort. Feelings of trust, competence, independence, and interdependence are made clear and strengthened. Building, strengthening, and sustaining relationships is a purpose and a function of creating communities of learning.

1. Relationships and Community

The concept of community serves as a powerful metaphor in the process of rethinking and renewing high schools. Learning occurs essentially in association with others–in community. It is the "relationship" that educates. Creating a robust, caring, and respectful community within the school, and building better connections with the community are two areas of critical focus. This includes proactively engaging young people in respectful, trusting and empowering interpersonal relationships to open and engage their minds.

Communities of learning are open and inclusive. They cultivate a sense of belonging in students and the surrounding community by demonstrating clarity of purpose, fairness, equity, and personal support. They provide frequent occasions for all students to experience success. Communities of learning enable young people to care effectively for themselves and others, and encourage them to contribute to the common good through service and active problem solving.

The community provides critical support systems, assets and opportunities–social, emotional, cultural, vocational, educational–to enhance schools' capacity and expand the experience of young people beyond the classroom. Working collaboratively, schools and communities are better able to respond to local needs and opportunities and to achieve more successful outcomes.

2. Educational Equity and Excellence

Power and privilege rather than intelligence or ability are at the heart of inequality. (Nieto, 1999)

Learning is understood in the broader context of the social, economic, and cultural lives of students and their families, school staff, and community. In the school community, diversity is expected and embraced as a strength and an asset. Learning programs, instructional practices, and responsive supports and services are focused on ensuring that every student has equitable opportunity and benefit. The commitment to educational excellence is for all students.

3. Empowerment

Empowerment is both the purpose and the outcome of secondary education. Communities of learning are democratic: valuing and fostering participation, inclusiveness, and the common good for all involved. They prepare students for active participation in democratic society by supporting their freedom of expression and by providing opportunities to evaluate ideas, to make choices, and to take on responsibilities that contribute to the public good.

4. Responsive, Flexible, and Accommodating

Schools are responsive, flexible, and accommodating in meeting needs and engaging young people in the learning community. They are "student ready," able to respond to changing and diverse needs, rather than asking students to be "school ready." Each school creates responsive approaches and structures that make sense in its local context through the active deliberation and collaboration among school staffs, families, and students about their goals and needs.

High schools must accommodate the lives of young people, in such ways that accommodation becomes a negotiation among students and their families with schools–a negotiation that is mutually defined, constructed, and achieved. (Nieto, 1999)

Understanding Community Education: A Foundation for School^{PLUS}

Community Education is at the centre of the School^{PLUS} vision. School^{PLUS} calls for all schools to adopt Community Education philosophy and practices. This means that schools are open and inclusive, actively engaging students and family members, and establishing strong relationships and partnerships with community groups, human services, and individuals in support of learning and well-being. Moreover, the learning program, services, and supports in each school respond to the unique needs and interests of its community.

Community Education is a philosophy based on community involvement and lifelong learning. Community Education embraces the following beliefs:

- Everyone in the community–individuals, families, businesses, public and private agencies–share responsibility for the education of all.
- Schools have a major role to play in nurturing shared understanding and respect among diverse groups and interests and in fostering community.
- Education is a lifelong process.
- Citizens have a responsibility and a right to be involved in determining community needs, in identifying community resources, and in linking those needs and resources to improve their community (school community included).
- A vibrant and caring society requires citizens to be actively involved in the affairs of their communities.

Benefits of Community Education

The long history of community education throughout the world, and recent experiences in Saskatchewan document the numerous benefits of collaboration between schools and communities. Some benefits are:

- creating extended family and support networks for children and youth that display the spirit of sharing the responsibility to care, protect, and teach young people;
- using students' daily life experiences and environment to situate curriculum implementation and learning;
- coming together to share school community resources and activities;
- offering surrounding community members, of all ages, a central location to gather during and beyond the school day; modelling to young people hope, healthy lifestyles, and the power of citizens gathering to contribute to the state of their community and to engage in lifelong learning opportunities;
- gathering together as human services to collaborate, share, and integrate resources and effective services. This provides an opportunity to create a seamless and coordinated system

of supports that is easily accessible and friendly to use by all;

- creating a wealth of leadership capacity, among administrators, teachers, students, families and community members, to achieve much more than the leadership of one can accomplish alone;
- developing a sense of belonging and a sense of community for all by valuing every member of a group, a classroom, a school or larger community;
- getting to know the whole student and teaching with knowledge of their background through meaningful interactions with them, their families, and the community;
- being a school that is continually sensitive and responsive to the lives of students, families, staff, and communities; understanding the role, responsibility, and connections related to the school's impact on significant community issues such as childcare, nutrition, community relations, poverty, or unemployment; and,
- improving outcomes for students and the school community by engaging in processes of reflection, inquiry, and assessment that inform practices and heighten understanding and learning.

Community Education and Social Issues

Community Education links education and social issues. Community Education principles and practices provide an opportunity for educators to work with others in the community to promote equity, build upon strengths, reduce the impact of negative life circumstances, and provide timely interventions that support the achievement of individual, group and community goals. Community Education principles and practices are supported through responsive learning programs, family and community involvement, youth engagement and involvement, integrated services, and community development initiatives.

School^{PLUS} and Community Education

School^{PLUS} invites schools to maximize the learning potential of all children and youth by expanding their engagement of the community in a reciprocal relationship of sharing and support. It is an exciting opportunity to view the education profession and resources in the community as strengths to be combined in the life of the school. Advancing the School^{PLUS} concept promotes an appreciation for strengthening relationships and connections between schools, families, and the community. Schools and communities together can create multiple opportunities to benefit from an exchange of strengths, resources, services, and supports as they partner to meet common goals through collaborative and effective practices.

Effective Practices for High Schools

The practice of education is highly complex. It consists of many intricate moves and involves the life and culture of a school, its structure and organization, pedagogy and curriculum, and the experience, energy, and interaction of the students and adults learning and working within it. Schools are further shaped by the context of their surrounding communities. Every high school has its own unique character.

This section provides an overview of effective practices that have been demonstrated in research and experience to be successful in meeting complex and diverse learning needs and in achieving learning excellence. These suggestions are intended to serve as a set of tools and a compass for rethinking, enacting, and guiding the renewal of high schools as communities of learning and support.

Understanding Effective Practices...

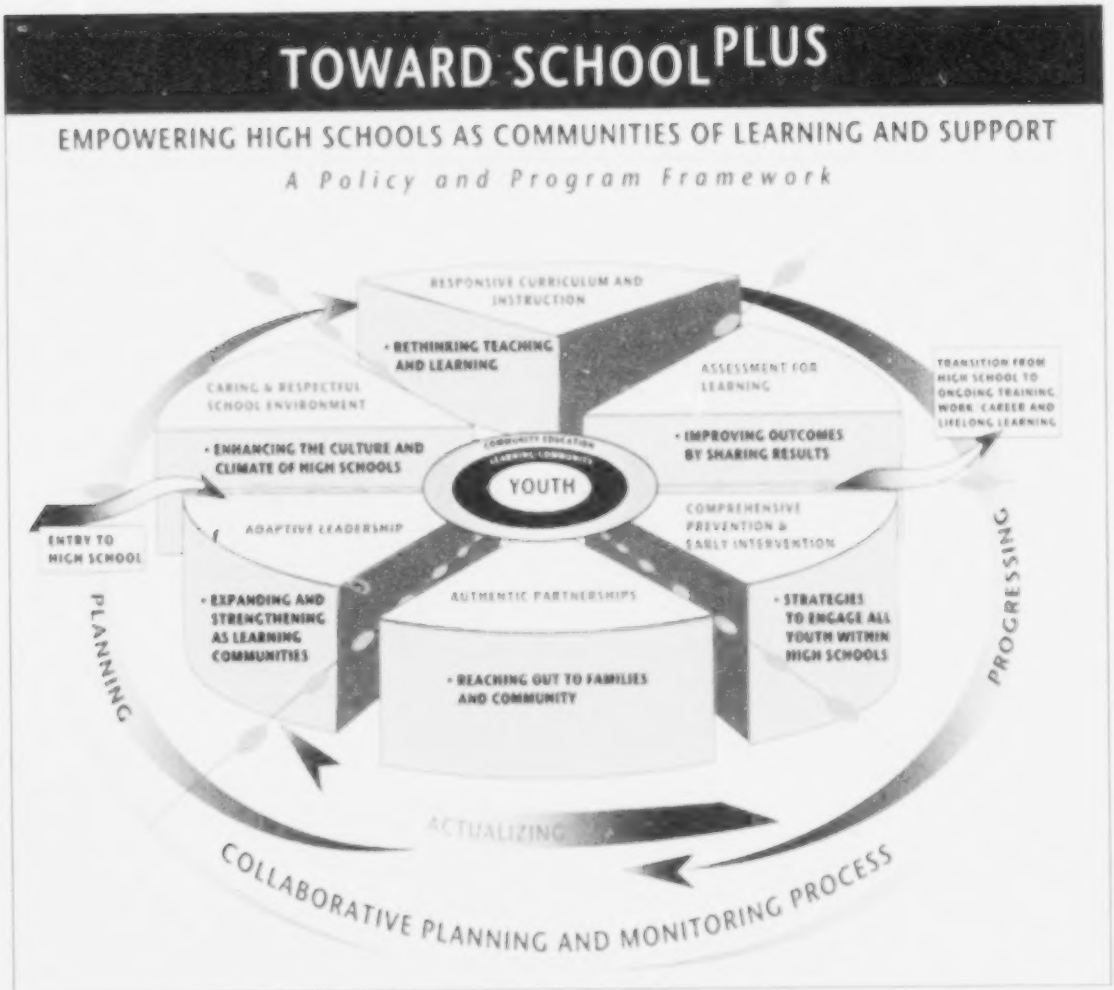
the term "effective practice" is used to describe solid, thoughtful, knowledgeable and successful action in the service of worthwhile educational goals and outcomes. Effective practice embraces certain educational ideas, actions and experiences. It has an extensive base in research and the study of human development, in an improved understanding of how learning works, and in the history and philosophy of education.
(Daniels and Bizar, 1998)

Effective Practices

The following categories of effective practice form an interrelated framework of ideas, strategies, and actions. Educators, and other members of the learning community in high schools, are invited to adopt these in the process of renewing high schools and constructing communities of learning and support.

1. **Strategies to Engage ALL Youth Within High Schools:**
   Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention
2. **Rethinking Teaching and Learning:**
   Responsive Curriculum and Instruction
3. **Enhancing the Culture and Climate of High Schools:**
   Caring and Respectful School Environment
4. **Reaching Out to Families and Community:**
   Authentic Partnerships
5. **Expanding and Strengthening as Learning Communities:**
   Adaptive Leadership
6. **Improving Outcomes by Sharing Results:**
   Assessment for Learning

The following illustration demonstrates the strong links between effective practices for high schools and the effective practices toward School^{PLUS}. Choosing to strengthen one of the effective practice areas identified on this model will lead to opportunities for renewal and improvement in many other areas.


TOWARD SCHOOL PLUS
EMPOWERING HIGH SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING AND SUPPORT
A Policy and Program Framework
RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
• RETHINKING TEACHING AND LEARNING
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING
TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO ONGOING TRAINING, WORK, CAREER AND LIFELONG LEARNING
CARING & RESPECTFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
• ENHANCING THE CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF HIGH SCHOOLS
• IMPROVING OUTCOMES BY SHARING RESULTS
YOUTH
ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION
ENTRY TO HIGH SCHOOL
AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS
• EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING AS LEARNING COMMUNITIES
• STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE ALL YOUTH WITHIN HIGH SCHOOLS
• REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY
PLANNING
PROGRESSING
ACTUALIZING
COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND MONITORING PROCESS

Explanation of the Illustration: A Closer Look at the Policy and Program Framework

Youth

As with School^{PLUS}, youth, are central to this Policy and Program framework. At the heart of this framework is a commitment to:

- intellectual, personal, social, physical and cultural/spiritual learning and well-being opportunities and outcomes for every young person; and,
- youth engagement in their learning and well-being experiences and goals.

Learning Community

In the framework model above, as in life, each young person is surrounded by members who make up their learning community. It is broader than the classroom and school and signals that meaningful learning occurs in all aspects of school and community life. Learning is not restricted to lessons in a school environment; learning also takes place daily in family and community interactions. Schools and communities have the choice of working together as a strong community of learning and support that models a commitment to lifelong learning and to the common and shared desire to see all youth learn, be healthy, and succeed.

Community Education

High schools that adopt the Community Education philosophy work together as a community of learning and support to achieve common goals and realize possibilities that could not be reached in isolation. As emphasized by School^{PLUS}, schools have changed and today they have two functions: to educate children and youth; and to serve as centres at the community level for the delivery of supports and services for young people and their families. Community Education embraces both functions as challenges and opportunities that can be best addressed by communities and schools working together. Through shared planning, shared responsibility, shared leadership, and shared understanding, it is possible to invite all to contribute to improving and to realizing desired learning and life outcomes.

Collaborative Planning and Monitoring

Schools and communities are not static; they are constantly changing and developing as people, circumstances, and the school community context changes. Collaborative planning and monitoring processes acknowledge change and diversity by engaging in ongoing school and community development. This framework invites high school members to participate in a process of continuous learning and improvement to inform planning and measure progress

toward individual and common goals. Collaborative planning and monitoring contributes to making changes that strengthen high school practices, programs, policies, and processes designed to meet intended outcomes.

Transitions

Recognizing learning as a lifelong journey, high school is but one period of learning; yet it is a complex and critical period as youth grow and develop, gain knowledge, form relationships, and exercise choices that impact their future. This Policy and Program framework acknowledges students' paths as diverse and individual as they enter into high school, experience high school, and transition on to continued learning, training, work, career, community and family lives. The practices within this framework emphasize involving youth in establishing their learning and life goals; embracing youth as learners and contributing members of a large learning community; and surrounding youth with the personal support that they require to succeed through this period of transition.

Effective Practices

The interrelated and dynamic nature of the effective practices supports many choices, options, and starting points. Improving the learning and well-being opportunities and outcomes for all young people begins by identifying one or two areas that best respond to current strengths and needs, and to the uniqueness of the school community.

Effective Practice 1:

Strategies to Engage All Youth Within High Schools

Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention

Based upon values and principles that lead to timely actions, effective prevention and early intervention practices prepare individuals and groups to manage conditions, reduce vulnerabilities, and support success. Timely actions in young people's lives have greater impact when the decisions are made ***by*** *or* ***with*** *the individuals impacted. As part of a community, schools play a dominant role as young people prepare for the challenges and successes that lie in their future.*

Challenge:

To develop new strategies to engage ALL youth more meaningfully within the school environment.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

1. To think differently about how students, educators, and other adults work together.
2. To plan course content with students and support self-directed learning.
3. To increase the voice and role of students.
4. To assess current practices of youth engagement as a school community and to identify areas for growth.

Youth Quote

The process of creating a better education system is not a relay-race, but a marathon. We youth are not just passing the baton to adults and expecting them to finish the race. We want to be involved in every step and every decision.

John Kohli, (*Provincial Youth Delegation, 2003*).

1. To think differently about how students, educators, and other adults work together.

How educators and other adults work collaboratively with young people and contribute to the learning process and school community is very significant. Adults move to the heart of student concerns by listening carefully and respectfully to student voices and by nurturing the active involvement of students in the learning experience. Moreover, most adults possess "institutional powers," such as organizational expertise and connections to a range of resources that are not accessible to young people. It is their task to create the organizational infrastructure to enable all youth to meaningfully engage in the learning process and the school environment. It is important to reflect on current practices and to assess their effectiveness while continuing to learn new ways of working together. For instance,

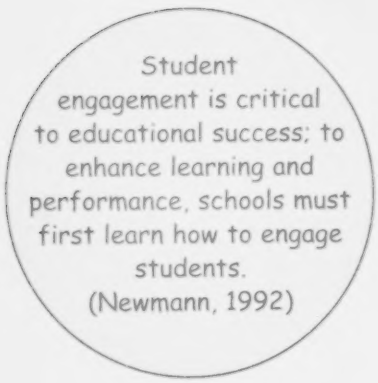
- The mutual contributions of young people and adults produce a synergy. This synergy drives decision-making groups to greater innovation and effectiveness and improves performance. As mentors to youth, educators and school staff find ways to provide them with opportunities to assume responsibilities, to make decisions, and to take leadership within the school community.
- No longer is it the sole responsibility of school staff to determine school and classroom practices; now, students are an integral part of the process.
- The more traditional power relationship between educators and students shifts to one of more mutual respect and trust.
- School activities, much like curriculum and class activities, are adapted and expanded in order to support the diverse range of student interests and skill levels.

> Young people are observant, are often capable of analytical and constructive comment, and usually respond well to the serious responsibility of helping identify aspects of schooling that strengthen or get in the way of their learning. (Rudduck, Day, and Wallace, 1997)

2. To plan course content with students and support self-directed learning.

Adolescence is a critical developmental period in the lives of young people. It is at this time that young people initiate independent thought and activity, see themselves as distinct persons able to make decisions and judgements, and begin to stand apart from the adults on whom they have depended.

Students learn best when they become personally engaged. Learning must be purposeful and relevant for them. They need a clear sense of direction–understanding precisely what they are to do and why they are to do it. Schools can start the process of building a learning community by asking young people about what makes learning and school engaging for them. It is important to consult with students regularly using natural opportunities. These opportunities may occur in the classroom at the end of semester, or unit of work. At the school level, regular meetings should occur with diverse student representatives. Occasionally, consultations around specific events, whole-school conferences, or professional development activities can be used to strengthen the environment of engagement.


Student engagement is critical to educational success; to enhance learning and performance, schools must first learn how to engage students.
(Newmann, 1992)

The Common Essential Learning (CEL) in Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum focus on the creation of opportunities and experiences that are necessary for students to become capable, self-reliant, self-motivated and lifelong learners who value learning as an empowering activity of great personal and social worth. Creating a culture within high schools that will nurture the disposition and ability for self-direction is essential if young people are to become active and socially responsible citizens, critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and competent decision makers. It is also important not to overlook the significance and role that families and community will need to play in this process. This rich resource is often untapped and/or underutilized.

3. To increase the voice and role of students.

Involving young people at many levels of meaningful school decision making has powerful and positive effects for youth, adults, schools, and communities. Valuing students as effective partners requires structures and practices at multiple levels to ensure that their voice is represented in school decision making. In order for students to be effective partners with educators, high schools need to create structures and to develop practices that facilitate student participation. The challenge is not only to find ways to engage young people, but also to be willing as adults to step back to allow them to make decisions, to learn from their mistakes,and to offer them support in the process.

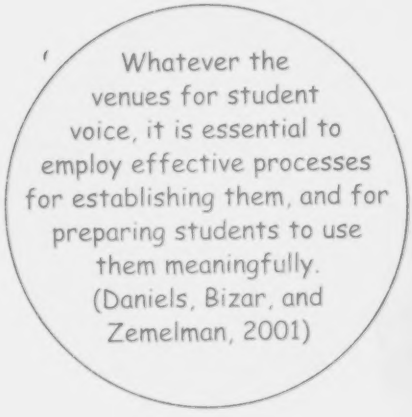
The meaningful involvement of students has a positive impact on shaping the culture of a school. Students quickly identify whether their ideas are valued. When they realize that their involvement is not window dressing, they gain confidence in the role that they can play. Energy and commitment grows and gradually students work in harmony with staff to create a stronger school community.

As communication patterns shift to be more inclusive of students, they in turn, become strong voices in support of decisions that they have helped to make.

4. To assess current practices of youth engagement as a school community and to identify areas for growth.

Experience and research have demonstrated that students are the ones who focus on the mission, speaking their minds and introducing a healthy perspective to organizational governance. They bring their maturing cognitive capabilities, their thirst for responsibility and autonomy, their need for belonging, as well as their first-hand knowledge of youth interests and concerns that are generally not accessible to adults. They also bring connections to other young people and can leverage the participation and skill of their peers in the life of the school community.

How students are engaged will vary. Data can be gathered in a number of ways: through surveys and questionnaires, student logs and journal reflections, focus group discussions, individual and small-group interviews, and open reporting. Analyzing and interpreting the findings, along with their presentation and reporting are integral parts of the process and should be a shared responsibility whenever appropriate.


Whatever the venues for student voice, it is essential to employ effective processes for establishing them, and for preparing students to use them meaningfully. (Daniels, Bizar, and Zemelman, 2001)

A number of models of youth participation appear in research literature. Each strives to create a framework for assessing the degree and quality of youth participation evident in current practices. In order for youth engagement to become a reality, three key elements have been identified:

1. Knowledge

Sharing information with young people, in youth-friendly forums and formats, supports youth to become engaged, gain confidence, and feel respected. When information is shared with young people there is an opportunity for adults and youth to construct knowledge together.

2. Opportunity

Create more opportunities for youth to participate in purposeful and authentic ways. Youth want to have influence over decisions that impact on their lives. By creating common practices and structures that invite youth involvement in shared decisions, adults demonstrate that they really do care to hear what young people have to say.

3. Support

Listen to young people by supporting them to have a voice in the circumstances that impact their life. At any age, speaking out to voice your thoughts to others requires confidence, experience and skills. This task is much more difficult for those who do not traditionally feel heard. Support from adults that youth know, choose, and trust eases their ability to accomplish this task and contributes to young people feeling safe, valued, and listened to.

(New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People website - http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/files/tpsresources.pdf)

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue about present practice and what is needed to move toward increased youth engagement. (Additional reflective questions can be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth*, 2001.)

To think differently about how students, educators, and other adults work together.

- *What events in my school experiences have helped me to see the power that teachers have over students' feelings about themselves and their learning (for better or worse)? In what way does my need for power influence my relationship with students? How comfortable am I in sharing my power with others–particularly students? What shifts might I need to make in my classroom routines?*

To plan course content with students and support self-directed learning.

- *What do I need to do differently to involve students more purposefully in planning course content in my classroom? Why is this important to the learning process? What criteria will I use to measure my success?*

To increase the voice and role of students.

- *What needs to change in our school community for students to become more meaningfully involved in decision-making processes (that is, beyond the current selection of elective credits and limited experiences offered by student government)? What challenges will we face? How might we overcome these?*

To assess current practices of youth engagement as a school community and to identify areas for growth.

- *How can students be engaged in the process of helping schools transform? Are adults prepared and ready to look critically at patterns to engage youth meaningfully and to work with young people through new structures and processes? Have there been opportunities for adults to develop skills as youth allies and partners versus instructors and supervisors? Have there been opportunities for youth to develop skills to prepare them for roles as decision-makers, problem-solvers, and public representatives of the school community?*

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Effective Practice 2:

Rethinking Teaching and Learning

Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

Responsive curriculum and instruction is flexible and adapts to the needs of the learner. Implementation of Core Curriculum is a shared responsibility among school staff, students, families, and community.

Challenge:

To rethink teaching and learning.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

Education has been described as a highly complex and uncertain enterprise. What is certain is that teaching is key to improving student learning. Communities of learning emerge through a process of collaborative critical reflection, put into practice by students, educators, and others within each school community. The following roles and responsibilities support improved student learning:

1. To support reflective practice among students, teachers, and others involved in the education system.
2. To challenge and to support teachers to learn new teaching strategies and approaches.
3. To ensure that teaching and learning are culturally affirming and appropriate.
4. To facilitate educational opportunities and to create support systems for all students, especially when students are vulnerable and facing challenges in their lives.

Youth Quote

The purpose of high school is to educate and to prepare students for the world they must live in - Ian, Age 15

You have to be able to talk with students - Scott, Age 16

(in response to "Best ways to teach high school students")

1. **To support reflective practice among students, teachers, and others involved in the education system.**

Reflection involves both thinking back and looking forward–understanding past events and imagining future possibilities. (*Classroom Curriculum Connections*, 2001).

The actualization of Core Curriculum depends upon supporting reflective practice across the education system. Curriculum actualization will happen only through the participation and involvement of many different people: students, teachers, parents and caregivers, Elders, administrators, trustees, and other community members. While we recognize the value of strong provincial leadership, it is these people within each school community who are in the best position to plan and to take responsibility for the continuous renewal and success of Core Curriculum in their jurisdiction.

Teacher reflection is critical to the teaching and learning process. Curriculum reflection, curriculum inquiry, and curriculum networking processes offer teachers and students opportunities for different forms of learning. These include opportunities to:

- increase their understanding of teaching/learning situations;
- expand their repertoire of instructional and assessment techniques and learning strategies; and,
- strengthen their support systems, and relationships with colleagues, peers, and with the families and communities of young people.

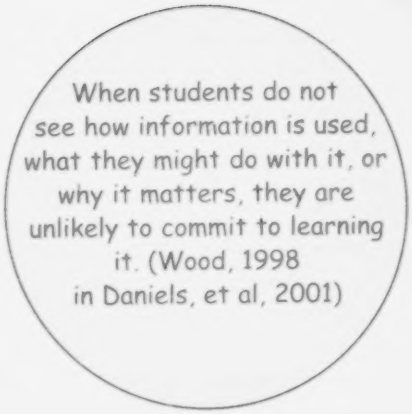
> The mind searches for patterns and connections; learning is a purposeful activity rooted in the search for meaning; learning is inextricably tied to an individual's need to make sense of reality. (Parsons, 1994)

The ultimate goal of these reflective practices is to strengthen teaching and to increase opportunities for student learning. Student learning can be supported by engaging students in reflective practice.

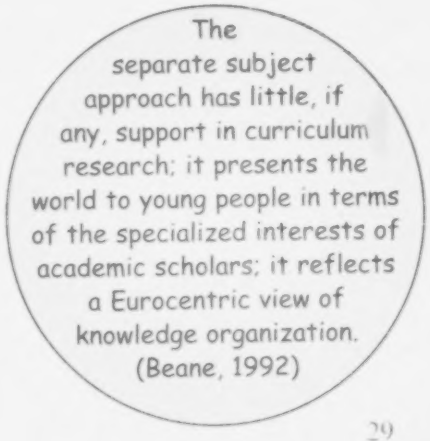
2. **To challenge and to support teachers to learn new teaching strategies and approaches.**

Effective teaching is the key to student learning. By viewing teaching and curriculum as building blocks rather than a laid out path, educators can recognize this key uncertainty of teaching: that a teacher cannot know precisely how another mind works. Engaging students is where the art and science of teaching begins. Meaningful learning cannot be delivered to students like fast food or

videos. Lasting learning develops largely through the hard work of learners, moved to participate and invest themselves in a continuous process of active learning. Teachers can facilitate this process by employing practices such as the following:


When students do not see how information is used, what they might do with it, or why it matters, they are unlikely to commit to learning it. (Wood, 1998 in Daniels, et al, 2001)

- Develop strategies to integrate the subjects of the curriculum:
  - Build instruction around themes, issues or problems that incorporate more than one subject or discipline.
  - Facilitate student appreciation of the systemic interconnected nature of the world and its knowledge through student discovery of connections and patterns. Invite students to show curiosity and interest by exploring new experiences, materials, and puzzling or surprising events occuring in the world.
- Use time, space, school and community resources creatively.
- Group students and teachers in different ways for in-depth study to occur.
- Connect learning and curricula to real life experiences:
  - Focus as learners and teachers on problems and situations as they occur in everyday life with all their complexity and uncertainty.
  - Encourage students to explore personal interests and questions.
  - Provide opportunities for students to become actively involved in life outside of school through service learning or project-based learning. Service learning supports students to discover their gifts and apply them in their community as a volunteer or leader. Project-based learning engages students in community development activities.
  - Incorporate community-based learning experiences into the curriculum by sharing curriculum objectives with the community and inviting their support and participation.
  - Invite community into the school and recognize the knowledge and expertise that resides there, thereby honouring and affirming the identity of a community.
  - Establish a network of school and community people and resources in support of learning and well-being.


The separate subject approach has little, if any, support in curriculum research; it presents the world to young people in terms of the specialized interests of academic scholars; it reflects a Eurocentric view of knowledge organization. (Beane, 1992)

- Invite students to contribute to their learning and the learning of others:

- Challenge students with high and clearly articulated expectations of them held by teachers, peers, and other adults; support students by the belief that they will be successful.
- Allow students to feel powerful and to make choices about their learning.
- Support students to develop awareness of their own thinking processes and perceptual abilities and those of others.
- Stress collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and team work versus competition.
- Stress that students contribute to the classroom, school, and community and make a difference as they bring unique talents and abilities to each collective.

> In a learning environment where the children's prior knowledge is respected and valued and where they are allowed to manipulate, control, and question what they are learning about. . . . In this community, the teacher is more like a group guide or enabler, providing and setting up the learning experiences, but allowing the students to experiment, question, observe, and manipulate the environment at their own pace, in their own way.
> (Stanko, 1991, in Bonstingl, 1992)

- Organize classroom workshops in addition to the traditional lecture/textbook lesson:
  - Encourage educators and other adults to serve as mentors to students.
  - Create a classroom environment that allows students to learn by doing.
  - Support students to develop awareness of their own feelings, needs, wants, fears, and interests and to develop the abilities to calm oneself, focus, and concentrate.
  - Provide students with choices for how they learn and for how they demonstrate their learning.
  - Incorporate goal setting and self-assessment activities in the learning program.

- Construct meaning and create knowledge:
  - Move student learning beyond listening and merely reproducing or identifying the knowledge of others.
  - Provide students with opportunities to express their understanding through written or oral forms, the creation of things, or through performance (journals, learning logs, sketch-books, drawing, cartooning, mapping, webbing, dancing, videotaping, and singing).
  - Encourage inquiry and opportunities for students to understand interrelationships and to apply skills and insights to a range of situations.
  - Request immediate feedback from students about daily classroom activities.

- Rethink the role that students can play in the assessment process:
  - Refrain from seeing assessment as something that comes in the form of a test after learning is over.
  - Begin to develop assessment strategies that become an integral part of the learning process.

- Engage students in evaluating their own thinking processes.
- Use evaluation as a tool to teach students to self-monitor, self-evaluate, and set goals for further learning.
- Invite students to work with educators to develop meaningful assessment activities based on curriculum objectives.

3. To ensure that teaching and learning are culturally affirming and appropriate.

The success of all students in school and in life is a priority of the provincial education system. Enhanced and increased education and training opportunities for all Saskatchewan people, particularly Aboriginal people, are critical for the future. The proportion of Aboriginal school age population, 14 years and younger, in Saskatchewan is expected to grow from 24.8% in 2001 to an estimated 39% in 2018. Similarly, the proportion of Aboriginal children under the age of 5 is projected to grow from 27.4% in 2001 to a forecasted 43% in 2018. As schools move towards engaging First Nations and Mètis communities, Indigenous knowledge needs to be validated in the learning community through structures, policies, instruction, use of curriculum and community resources; and, through the climate and culture of the learning environment. It is critical to develop systems that reflect and honour the experience of all students.

> To sustain Indigenous Knowledge, one must be willing to take on responsibilities associated with that knowing, especially putting the knowledge into a daily practice. (Battiste, Henderson, and Youngblood, 2003)

Honouring different ways of knowing by Aboriginal peoples and other cultures in high schools can be initiated by making several choices to:

- develop new initiatives and strengthen current policies related to cultural affirmation and school climate;
- encourage healthy and meaningful relationship-building opportunities among all school community members;
- develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared decision making;
- support access to and development of practical, relevant, and authentic resources reflective of traditional and cultural knowledge;
- support teachers and students in efforts to actualize Aboriginal content and perspectives and the perspectives of diverse cultures in learning experiences;
- learn from and about First Nations and Métis peoples and people of diverse cultures;
- with partners, develop long-term, comprehensive plans to support language and culture programs, such as Aboriginal languages and Native Studies;
- establish goals and monitor desired progress toward ensuring teaching and learning as culturally affirming and appropriate; and,

- practice equitable employment at all levels reflective of the school community (i.e., administration, staff, governance, volunteer).
- diversify the traditional membership in high schools to include Cultural Advisors and Elders. This requires increased awareness and respect for local traditions and protocols, and increased flexibility when these role expectations and responsibilities vary from the roles of others in schools.

Cultural Advisors and Elders

There are many forms of intelligence, many ways by which we know, understand, and learn about our world. (Lazear in Gilliland, 1995)

Cultural Advisors and Elders play a vital role in creating a culturally affirming school climate and in fostering knowledge in classroom and school environments. Through connections with staff, students, families, and community members, Advisors and Elders help others to develop an understanding of cultures, values, life experiences, and traditions.

In traditional Aboriginal ways, Elders are seen as guides, leaders, keepers of knowledge, counsellors, healers, and grandparents. Their teachings of worldview can initiate a new level of understanding and impact positively on processes of education and outcomes for students. Elders' teachings of traditional values and beliefs are beneficial for all students.

When Cultural Advisors and Elders are meaningfully included in schools, their contributions can support and promote harmony in the school and community. Everyone is served by building and enhancing relationships and understandings between diverse members in school communities.

Culturally affirming practices and relationships such as involving Cultural Advisors and Elders, support:

- the emergence of communities built on a foundation of understanding and respect between diverse cultures;
- expanded opportunities for learning as students, educators, and other school community members explore the benefits of different ways of knowing, such as traditional Aboriginal knowledge;
- increased academic success for all students;
- the development of students' cultural knowledge and understanding, pride in one's heritage, improving one's self-esteem and capacity to achieve goals, while feeling a sense of belonging; and,
- a school climate where people of diverse backgrounds feel welcome and engaged in determining and achieving desired outcomes.

4. To facilitate educational opportunities and to create support systems for all students, especially when students are vulnerable and facing challenges in their lives.

During the challenging period of adolescence all youth face periods of vulnerability. High schools are in a position either to make this period of growth and development better for students–more supportive, more helpful, more constructive –or worse–lonely and intimidating, exclusive, and unsuccessful. It is important that teachers, students, families, and community members work together to make the high school experience challenging, meaningful, and connected for all young people.

Students are faced with many challenges throughout high school. I think that alcohol is one of the major challenges effecting *[sic]* high school students. I think that there could be some sort of programs in our school to help people get out of something they are in like drug and alcohol programs - Amanda, Age 16.

In some high schools, students considered most vulnerable become further marginalized by receiving the least challenging educational opportunities. When poverty and problems in living impact student performance, classroom management may become an educator's first priority. It becomes tempting to reduce or replace high-performance learning and expectations with a much more limited focus on basic skills, remediation, and vocational education.

Building on Student Experience and Previous Knowledge

Research on learning and teaching is showing that students traditionally considered the most vulnerable and at risk of failing in school benefit significantly from teaching that builds upon student experience and previous knowledge. The learning achievement of youth who are vulnerable can improve significantly when teaching practices and relationships reinforce high learning expectations and involve students in solving complex problems, writing and articulating their thoughts orally, and learning to reason. Teaching for meaning and understanding is particularly appropriate when it helps young learners connect their daily lives and diverse experiences outside of school to the world of school.

Young people cannot develop a sense of their own value unless they have opportunities to be of value to others. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 1990)

Some families change schools numerous times in the school year. This mobility creates problems for students as they adjust and readjust to different schools. It also complicates the efforts of teachers to provide an effective learning program in a traditional system. For some high school students, their education is not their sole priority. Some students may be faced with other priorities such as being a parent or living independently, which make it difficult to balance life and learning. If transitions or living

circumstances are too difficult, students can fall behind in their achievement and disengage from learning. It is important that high schools value students as unique individuals and creatively provide supports to all students in order to ease the complex challenge of competing life circumstances. Continuity, supportive relationships, and creative alternatives can allow students to achieve their learning goals as diverse circumstances arise. Current examples of programs and supports to address these issues include:

- re-entry classrooms that help to ease the transition back to school for students who have been out of school for some time;
- additional communications in support of individual student learning and well-being between teachers and schools;
- mentorship and orientation programs for students entering high school;
- alternate and e-learning opportunities in support of self-directed study;
- comprehensive early intervention and prevention programs and practices;
- alternate semester systems and timetables such as trimester and quarter semesters, or block timetables;
- alternate and multi-faceted learning environments such as alternate education programs or store front programs;
- engagement of students in setting personal learning goals, plans, and capacity to measure own progress and success; and,
- connections and assistance to meet individual needs such as nutrition, daycare, independent living and support systems.

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue about present practice and to encourage rethinking about how we teach and how students learn. (Additional reflective questions can also be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth, 2001*)

To support reflective practice among students, teachers, and others involved in the education system.

- *What personal knowledge/experiences do I have in using reflective practice as an instructional tool? How much is reflective practice currently a part of our school community? How do our current structures and practices need to be adapted in order to support reflective practice among teachers and students, teachers and administrators, and the school and community? Do we have adequate and appropriate teacher supports and a variety of tools to support teacher and student reflection in the context of Core Curriculum? (Additional reflective checklists for teachers and administrators can be found in information bulletins related to the renewal of particular curricula such as Supporting English Language Arts Renewal at the Elementary Level [K-5]: An Information Bulletin [2002].)*

Strategies that incorporate support for teachers and administrators to engage in reflection will move reform initiatives forward.
(Kent, 1993)

To challenge and to support teachers to learn new teaching strategies and approaches.

- *How can all students be encouraged to reach their full potential? How do my current instructional strategies create opportunities for students to experience success? Why is it important that these successes be shared among staff and with families and the community? What are the challenges that I face when trying to learn new teaching strategies and approaches? What supports do I have available to me? What resources do I need to access?*

To ensure that teaching and learning are culturally affirming and appropriate.

- *How do I adapt curriculum content to reflect and to include my students' experiences, identities and perspectives? How do I integrate Aboriginal content and perspectives? Why is it important to link curriculum content with students' life experiences? How can we increase Aboriginal representation in our school? What reflects student success in the minds of staff, students, families and the community?*

To facilitate educational opportunities and to create support systems for all students, especially when students are vulnerable and facing challenges in their lives.

- *In what ways do I reach out to students who are facing challenges in their personal lives? How can I create and expand opportunities to partner with families and the community to support these students? How can I adapt the curriculum content in order for it to meet the needs of these students? How do we prepare students to deal with challenges in their lives? How can our school community and system be more flexible and responsive to students' needs?*

Recommended Resources and Supports

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Effective Practice 3:

Enhancing the Culture and Climate of High Schools

A Caring and Respectful School Environment

A school's culture develops from the collective thinking and actions of its members. Climate, although hard to define, is the tone or atmosphere a person feels when entering a school. It results from the interactions among administrators, teachers, students, families and community members.

Challenge:

To build a caring and respectful community within high schools that is more inviting to all students, families, and community.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

1. To recognize that building strong personal relationships with students, their families and the community is an integral and essential part of the teaching and learning process.
2. To adapt current practices to be more responsive to the developmental levels and needs of students at the high school level.
3. To find innovative ways to design and adapt high school structures, space, resources, and policies to be more flexible and responsive to student strengths and needs.
4. To recognize the impact that a school climate and culture has on students' ability to learn and to repond by making necessary changes.
5. To work together with staff, students, their families, and the community to create an environment that respects the dignity and worth of all.

Youth Quote

Relationships between school staff and students should be more open and they should communicate more with each other - Robyn, Age 17
When I think about my school the first thing that comes to mind is the community school - Kirk, Age 15

1. **To recognize that building strong personal relationships with students, their families and the community is an integral and essential part of the teaching and learning process.**

Trust and respect develop when people know each other. Effective teachers invest time in getting to know their students well enough to touch their minds and their hearts, to know what catches their attention and what entices them to concentrate, to puzzle, and to persevere. They strive to nurture their students' sense of self-confidence and to support their hopes and their dreams. Effective teachers understand how important it is that students maintain their dignity throughout the learning process and take time to listen to their students' worries and concerns. They recognize the significance and purpose of finding ways to engage families and the community in the learning process.

The following practices will help to nurture a learning community that is both inviting and supportive for young people and their families:

- Create regular opportunities for staff, students, families, and community to share information and ideas and to participate in decision-making processes;
- Organize regular meeting times with teachers, students, and families;
- Plan fun learning activities to build relationships between students, and their families, and teachers; and,
- Provide teachers and students with time to set goals and plan learning activities together.

In a personalized school environment, relations among students and staff are based on an ethic of caring that goes beyond the boundaries of the formal school. Personal bonds between young people and adults in a school have a greater capacity to arouse and engage learning. (McLaughlin and Talbert, 1990)

2. **To adapt current practices to be more responsive to the developmental levels and needs of students at the high school level.**

Education plays a critical role in the healthy and successful development of young people and in supporting students to be caring and contributing citizens. The focus in Saskatchewan high schools is on the development of the whole student–cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual.

Staff in developmentally attentive high schools commit to making the learning environment user-friendly by matching the developmental needs of adolescents to the kinds of experiences high schools provide.

Developmental Need/Experience	Mismatch	Match
When students need **close affiliation** they experience...	· large depersonalized or bureaucratized schools.	· environments of belonging, acceptance and safety - physically, emotionally, intellectually and culturally; · affirmation that they, their family and community are significant; and, · recognition of their strengths and gifts which can be shared and built upon.
When students need **to develop autonomy** they experience...	· few opportunities for choice and punitive approaches to discipline	· learning opportunities and choices that are negotiated and self-directed; · positive alternatives to suspension, expulsion and conflict resolution; and, · opportunities for independence and success.
When students need **expansive cognitive challenges and opportunities to demonstrate their competence** they experience...	· work focused largely on the passive learning of reams of facts and bits of skills.	· community-based learning opportunities that are engaging and significant to learners; · integrated curriculum learning experiences and challenges; and, · a sense of mastery as they monitor their personal learning objectives and as they share responsibility for their learning, and that of others.
When students need **to build self-confidence and a healthy identity** they experience...	· sorting by age, race, socioeconomic status, language, gender and perceived ability; and sometimes labels as academically deficient.	· meaningful membership in the school community; · generosity, care and respect through relationships with other youth and adults, and through formal and informal support systems that offer timely help and resources; and, · service-learning and leadership options that invite youth to influence decisions and to be a part of shaping their school community experience.

(Brendtro et al., 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1997)

When students enter high school, many enter feeling good about school. It is critical that when students leave high school they leave knowing that they count and they can learn versus leave persuaded they do not count and cannot learn. (Darling-Hammond, 1997)

3. To find innovative ways to design and adapt high school structures, space, resources, and policies to be more flexible and responsive to student strengths and needs.

In order to be more effective in meeting the needs of students, high schools are being challenged to change long-standing traditions and structures such as:

- Re-examining the use of physical space and resources as a means of facilitating school and community partnerships. Wellness rooms, nutrition areas, e-learning areas, and daycares are examples of ways in which high school facilities are used for multiple purposes to meet student, family, and community needs.
- Trimester and quarter class systems taking the place of the traditional semester system.
- The block timetable is being used to accommodate community-based learning and service projects outside the school.
- Exploring the benefits of making alterations to the length and organization of the school calendar–school days, weeks, and years are flexing and changing.
- Renewing policies to reflect and respond to diverse individual student circumstances, and to family and community context.
- Diversifying staff teams in high schools. Teachers are becoming colleagues with a variety of differentiated staff who serve in roles that support student learning and well-being, such as outreach workers and other human service providers.
- Planning and assessment processes are designed to be engaging, inclusive, and participatory, involving administration, staff, students and families, and community.
- Student and staff groupings for classes and extra-curricular activities are carefully considered and designed to support inclusion and opportunities for learning and success, as individual students and as a learning community.

Suggestions for High School Change:

two teachers a class, or course
- Matthew, Age 16

start at 10 am and end at 4:30 pm
- Scott, Age 16

make our class smaller so people have a chance to speak their mind
- Jonathan, Age 16

4. To recognize the impact that a school climate and culture has on students' ability to learn and to respond by making the necessary changes.

A school's culture is unique. It is shaped by the values of the community and is influenced by the beliefs of the staff who work within the school and by the needs of the students who attend. Over time, the internalized culture of a school leads to unspoken norms that govern and maintain behaviour within a school. Climate, although hard to define, is the tone or atmosphere a person feels when entering a school. It results from the interactions among administrators, staff, students, families

and community members. Climate mirrors the school's internalized values, beliefs and attitudes and can be thought of as the outward expression of culture.

Healthy Culture and Climate

A high school that has a healthy culture and climate is characterized by the following:

- Learning for all is honoured and supported through school structures and communication processes.
- All individuals feel that they belong and are valued members of a social community.
- There is a balance between stability and flexibility in routines.
- Social relations reflect a standard of moral purpose, decency, and respect.

Key Issues in Improving Secondary Schools

1. **Size**. The high school is small–or feels small.
2. **Climate**. Every student is known, appreciated, and included in a diverse, collaborative community.
3. **Voice and leadership**. Both students and teachers exercise choice and make decisions in all elements of school life.
4. **Teaching**. Teachers collaborate with students to explore and employ a growing repertoire of instructional strategies.
5. **Curriculum**. With their teachers, young people engage in challenging inquiry into topics that matter.
6. **Community experiences**. Young people are engaged in the life of the community and the world of work.
7. **Scheduling**. The school day and calendar provide flexible and variable blocks of learning time.
8. **Technology and materials**. Contemporary technology and rich materials support students as thinkers, researchers, and authors.
9. **Assessment**. Teachers help students to monitor, evaluate, and guide their own thinking.
10. **Professional development**. Teachers are students of instruction, with many opportunities to learn and grow.
11. **Relationships**. The school works closely with parents, community organizations, and educational institutions.

(Daniels, et al., 2001)

5. **To work together with staff, students, their families, and the community to create an environment that respects the dignity and worth of *all*.**

A basic cultural requirement for engaging students is a sense of belonging in the school. Schools cultivate a sense of belonging for staff, students, their families, and the community when they:

- develop processes and opportunities for shared beliefs and create a common vision;
- communicate clear purposes of the goals of education and, as a community, define success;
- strive for fairness, equity, and due process with students, their families, and the community;
- offer respectful and sustained personal support and encouragement to students;
- communicate high expectations and demonstrate commitment and accountability for the success of *all* students in developing competence; and,
- integrate these features within a climate of caring that shows respect for the worth and dignity of all learners.

It is not enough for schools to have high expectations for their students. They must also act on those expectations to help **all** students meet school goals. (Christman & Macpherson, 1996; Corcoran & Wilson, 1985; Meir, 1995 in Murphy, 2001)

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue about present practice and what changes are required to build stronger and more caring and respectful school environments within high schools. (Additional reflective questions can be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth*, 2001)

To recognize that building strong personal relationships with students, their families, and the community is an integral and essential part of the teaching and learning process.

- *In what ways do my current classroom practices build strong relationships with my students? In what ways do I need to adapt them? How will relationships with my students be strengthened? What changes do I anticipate? How will these enhance my teaching and students' learning?*

To adapt current practices to be more responsive to the developmental levels and needs of students at the high school level.

- *What are the developmental levels and needs of the students whom I teach? What resources currently exist within our school community to support me with this assessment? How do I currently adapt my teaching practices to respond to students' developmental needs? When do I feel successful? When do I feel unsuccessful? Why? Where might I access additional resources to support my personal and professional growth?*

To find innovative ways to design and adapt high school structures, space, resources, and policies to be more flexible and responsive to students strengths and needs.

- *In an ideal world, what would our school community and my classroom look like? How would our school day and school year be organized? What changes do I need to make in order to move towards my ideal? What do I need to do to gain the support of others within my school community?*

To recognize the impact that a school climate and culture has on students' ability to learn and to respond by making necessary changes.

- *What opportunities have we provided for students and parents to offer feedback about our school climate and culture? Why is it important to invite them to participate in such discussions? How do we know when our students are genuinely engaged in learning? What might we do differently to support student learning within our school community, within our classrooms? What criteria will we use to measure our success?*

To work together with staff, students, their families and the community to create an environment that respects the dignity and worth of all.

- *How can we create opportunities: for students to become more independent learners? to respect and to support other students in the learning process? to be sensitive to the learning challenges of others? to invite families and community members to share their knowledge and talents with students? What structures and policies would we need to adapt in order to support us in this work?*

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Effective Practice 4:

Reaching Out to Families and Community

Authentic Partnerships

Authentic partnerships promote the values of mutual care and respect and are built on collaborative relationships with families, students, community, and human service agencies. (Saskatchewan Education, 1999). The entire community, its agencies, businesses, and organizations are a resource to support student learning and in turn the school's facilities and expertise are a resource for the community. (SIDRU, 2001)

Challenge:

To nurture strong relationships with families and community members and to build integrated partnerships that are reciprocal and help to create a supportive, stimulating learning environment.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

1. To develop new strategies to reach out to families and to enhance community capacity.
2. To strengthen school and family relationships and to find more effective ways to engage families within the school community.
3. To establish meaningful educational relationships and partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses.
4. To support integrated service delivery at the school site or linked to the school community.

Youth Quote

The purpose of high school is to educate and to prepare students for the world they must live in - Ian, Age 15

You have to be able to talk with students - Scott, Age 16
(in response to "Best ways to teach high school students")

1. **To develop new strategies to reach out to families and to enhance community capacity.**

Knowledge and skills in community development and engagement are becoming critical in order for high schools to be effective. Meaningful community development takes place only when trusting relationships exist between community and school. These strong relationships are the basis for planning and working together towards a common vision and goals. High schools have the capacity to become natural centres for community and catalysts for community development initiatives.

Community Education provides the philosophical foundation for engaging families and communities in schools. It is important to create opportunities for active involvement: for instance, asking families and community members to assist in such areas as identifying school and community assets and needs; establishing goals; designing programs; developing management, assessment, and decision-making processes.

> The community and the schools clearly must adopt common goals, values, needs, and expectations to produce individuals who care about the betterment of society. The community is everywhere–adults, the young, parents, business members, social service agencies, the judicial system, and the schools–who will prepare tomorrow's contributing citizens. What occurs in the community is reflected in the schools; what occurs in the schools ultimately affects the community. (Kinsley and McPherson, 1995)

2. **To strengthen school and family relationships and to find more effective ways to engage families within the school community.**

Schools maximize the learning potential of all young people by engaging families and community members in authentic partnerships that support student well-being and learning. When family and community members are involved directly in the school, students get the message that adults value and support their schools.

Connections between family and school strongly demonstrate that the school values the involvement of family in student learning. These connections also create opportunities for families to demonstrate their commitment to education. Some suggestions are outlined below:

- Invite family and community members to come to school and share information with students about their particular skills and abilities related to leisure/community interests or employment/business pursuits. This can occur through formal class presentations or workshops or informally as mentors and members of a larger learning community.
- Engage families in a process of identifying shared belief statements and a shared vision as a school community.
- Invite families and community members to share in the information exchange that occurs at staff meetings or to share professional development opportunities.
- Engage family members in student-led parent teacher conferences, where students guide their parents through an exhibition or portfolio of their work and learning.
- Ask students and their family members to define what success is to them and work with them to achieve this.
- Hold open forums with students and families in order to generate together ideas and strategies for new initiatives or solutions to problems and concerns.
- Establish working committees that unite staff, students, families and community members to plan innovative programs and to guide the school renewal process.
- Offer specialized programs to support families that are based on their input.

Good high schools become extended communities engaging the larger society in support of student and school success. (Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, and McGaughy, 2001)

3. To establish meaningful educational relationships and partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses.

Community-based organizations and businesses such as arts, cultural, sport and recreation, environmental organizations, or public and private agencies and businesses make significant contributions to young people's learning and development. They enhance the learning program in the school by nourishing and challenging young people in projects and activities through which they gain academic and life skills. They also provide young people with real life opportunities to develop positive ideas about their futures and the knowledge and confidence to plan and to reach their goals.

Service-learning experiences connect students to their communities, enrich students' learning, and help them develop personally, socially and academically. People in these communities believe that in performing service, youth learn to understand the meaning of community beyond self and develop a sense of responsibility and respect for others. (Kinsley and McPherson, 1995)

Youth Transitions To Work World

In today's work world, many adults have more than one career in a lifetime and it is difficult to predict some of the jobs that will exist in the future of our rapidly changing world. A wider range of skill-building opportunities through school-business partnerships creates opportunities for students to better prepare for the diverse and changing expectations of the labour market. Many opportunities can be created and strengthened through school-business partnerships such as:

- Concrete student projects designed collaboratively with business and community partners that call upon students to be responsible for an end result that will benefit all involved (ie/ environmental science projects, community art projects);
- Practical learning opportunities that combine academic study and with career exploration. (ie/ firefighting and chemistry)
- School-to-work internship or summer internships offering students opportunities to develop skills in a variety of work settings and become exposed to potential employment opportunities following graduation.
- Job Fairs, tours, and guest presentations, "adopt-a-school" programs, equipment and supply donations, and company staff volunteer programs offering tutoring, mentoring and special event assistance
- Professional development opportunities for teaching staff made available by business and industry partners that can be transferred to enhance teaching strategies and capacities.

(Daniels, Bizar and Zemelman, 2001)

Partnerships between high schools and community-based organizations, as with school-business partnerships, recognize that the lives and experiences of students inside and outside of the school are intertwined. Common goals can be realized through collaborative actions such as:

- integrating school and community resources for teaching and learning: co-developing programs to implement curriculum, planning and implementing projects, exchanging information for newsletters, encouraging students to share their work in youth organizations, and providing after school supports for learning (e.g., tutoring, access to computers and information, quiet places, safe setting);
- developing adult and community education programming;
- sharing resources and working together to employ differentiated staff to work among school community members and high school students to achieve common and desired outcomes; and,
- reconnecting high schools to community through experiential learning: service learning, work experience, and career planning activities.

Education and human services face common challenges as they try to help the same people respond to the same problems. Moreover, the goals that each system is setting for its own reform effort cannot be fully realized alone, but depend on complementary action from ...other sectors.
(Levy, 1989)

These activities integrate some of the different parts of students' lives so they feel rooted in the community and the school at the same time.

> Good connections are complex, not simple; they take time to build rather than being initiated at the stroke of a pen; and they rest on a deep understanding of what educational purposes the connections will serve. (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1998)

4. To support integrated service delivery at the school site or linked to the school community.

Relationships and partnerships with community members and organizations must be valued and nurtured. These take time and energy and cannot be taken for granted. The following guidelines outline the necessary conditions to make partnerships successful:

- **Ensure the strong commitment of each organization's** leaders at the highest level: CEOs and Directors of school divisions, involved community organizations, and businesses.
- Clearly define the goals from each organization's perspective.
- Clarify the roles to be played by each involved party.
- Take time to get to know one another and to learn how best to contribute to the shared goal.
- Recognize the significance of creating a climate that will support change.
- Challenge and renew longstanding structures, policies, and traditions to support common and collaborative initiatives and outcomes.
- Develop mutual trust through shared learning experiences and planning sessions that acquaint both educators and partners with one another's expertise, needs, and concerns.
- Evaluate and document results to demonstrate to the partners, as well as to the broader community, the accomplishments achieved. (Adapted from Garcia, 1994)

> Our school is a community school, so have people from our community and visitors coming in and out. I think that is a good idea because it lets others see what is going on in our school.
> - Amanda, Age 16.

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue on nurturing strong relationships with families and community members and on building integrated partnerships that help to create a supportive, stimulating learning environment. (Additional reflective questions can be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth*, 2001)

To develop new strategies to reach out to families and to enhance community capacity.

- *What relationships and partnerships currently exist between the school and community?*

To strengthen school and family relationships and to find more effective ways to engage families within the school community.

- *In what ways could the school community and families strengthen their relationships?*

To establish meaningful educational relationships and partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses.

- *Can more be done to bring the high school into the community and the community into the high school? Can school staff, students, their families and community members be engaged in this process? How?*

To support integrated service delivery at the school site or linked to the school community.

- *How can services be integrated within our community to more effectively support students and their families within the school community?*

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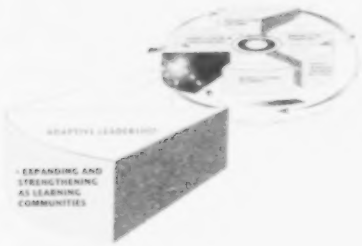
Effective Practice 5:

Expanding and Strengthening as Learning Communities

Adaptive Leadership



A school leadership team's greatest job is to create the conditions for growth and change to occur. They need to take an active role in shaping people's beliefs and values by creating a broader frame of reference for their learning community. They can do this by having a clear picture of where they are now and where they want to go. They share ownership of this picture by inviting others to help develop it.

Challenge:

To create the culture, structures, and processes within high schools to support, facilitate, and lead vibrant learning communities among staff, students, their families, and community members.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

1. To renew high school leadership to better include all students, their families and community members in constructive change, collective learning, and shared purpose.
2. To focus time, resources, and strengths on building vital learning communities in high schools.
3. To engage in positive opportunities as adaptive leaders and members of a strong learning community.

Youth Quote

It is important to realize who you are and where you are coming from before you start to do your research work. For example, what colour are your lenses? - Cass

(Quote from Centre for Excellence for Youth Engagement Newsletter, Fall 2001)

1. To renew high school leadership to better include all students, their families, and community members in constructive change, collective learning, and shared purpose.

If leadership in the high school is defined only by the membership of a few people in specific roles, or on leadership teams or councils, consider the limitations this creates. Many people who are not traditionally included in this concept of leadership do not have equitable opportunity to participate, share responsibility, and share purpose.

By redistributing power, authority, and providing leadership capacity-building opportunities among traditional leaders, school staff, students, families and community members, the concept of leadership becomes renewed and broadened. Leadership is then defined as learning together, surfacing beliefs and assumptions, creating actions, negotiating challenges and achievements based from shared beliefs, common purpose, new information, and new understandings. (Lambert, 1998). Leadership becomes a responsibility assumed by all at different times and in different ways.

...instead of looking for saviors, we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are not simple, painless solutions–problems that require us to learn new ways. (Heifetz, 2001)

High school leadership can be renewed and facilitated by:

- including staff, students, their families, and the broader community in processes to determine shared beliefs that will support their capacity to move forward and to work together on common goals;
- creating multiple opportunities for involvement that are skillfully facilitated and designed for collective learning, dialogue, and shared understanding;
- collaborating to develop a shared vision for the school community;
- encouraging shared planning and decision making based upon members' evaluations of current and potential school practices, policies, and structures in relation to this vision;
- using research-based evidence and data from continual and collective learning to guide and to assess shared responsibilities and shared accomplishments; and,
- celebrating milestones while moving forward to achieve shared vision.

Leadership Teams

Developing leadership teams can be an effective approach to building and broadening leadership capacity in a school community. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that teams accomplish shared tasks. Leadership team members, and others engaged by team activities, must have a

clear understanding of the role of each of the team members as well as the function of the team as a whole. Functions of leadership teams may vary from action research, to event planning, to spirit building, to curriculum implementation, or to interagency/community liaison. The examples in school communities have been plenty; however, it is critical that members of teams be supported in developing appropriate skills to model positive beliefs and practices. It is critical that team members act as leader mentors modelling inclusion versus exclusion.

Leaders of the past often erected walls. Now they must destroy these walls and replace them with bridges. (Kanter, 1996)

Mentoring

Mentoring can be another effective approach to developing and distributing high school leadership capacity. Mentoring is especially effective when the leader mentors are representative of the school community. Administrative leadership, teacher leadership, youth leadership, family and parent leadership, and leadership from community and businesses contribute to the dynamic of the whole school community. Building relationships is fundamental to the effectiveness of school community leadership as is the belief that "everyone has the right, responsibility, and capability to be a leader" (Lambert, 2003).

Aboriginal Leaders

Aboriginal community members desire to become meaningful participants in the education of their children. With respect to treaty relationships, there is an ethical obligation to invite and to ensure Aboriginal participation in policy and procedures, pedagogy, strategic planning, and hiring practices. Aboriginal leaders and mentors in high school communities not only serve students, families, and staff but serve as a supportive liaison between school staff and other members and leaders of the Aboriginal community, such as Métis locals, regional officials, and Tribal Councils.

A common factor in successful completion of high school is that the young people graduating had at least one person in their lives that cared about them or believed in them. Current school policies and procedures can be examined and modified, so that students and community members have a voice and a shared leadership role in helping every high school student succeed. High school leadership can be extended to access and to engage the aid of others within families, neighborhoods, human services, community services, and businesses. The gifts, abilities, supports and resources from many can contribute to student well-being and high school success and completion.

Features of Leadership Capacity in an Effective Learning Community:

- **Principals, Teachers, Parents, Students, and Community Members As Skillful Leaders** - all key players in the work of learning and life success.
- **Shared Vision Resulting in Program Coherence** - one leader's vision, standing alone, needs to be "sold" or "bought into." By contrast, a shared vision based upon the values and hope of the school community members ensures commitment.
- **Inquiry-Based Use of Information to Inform Decisions and Practice** - positioning "inquiry" and "collecting information for collective understanding" before "acting" so school community members become primary leaders in their improvement process.
- **Broad Involvement, Collaboration, and Collective Responsibility Reflected in Roles and Actions** - supporting a shift among school staff, students, family, and community members from seeing themselves as subjects in the school environment to seeing themselves as partners.
- **Reflective Practice that Leads Consistently to Innovation** - thinking about our own practice, and enabling others to think about theirs, can be a source of critical information or data that can lead to repeated or new success.
- **High or Steadily Improving Student Achievement** - academic performance, broad and comprehensive student achievement (such as personal and civic development), and equitable outcomes for all students are at the heart of leadership capacity.

(Adapted from Lambert, 2003)

A learning community (or organization) consists in a group of people who take an active, reflective, collaborative, learning-oriented, and growth promoting approach toward the mysteries, problems, and perplexities of teaching and learning. (Sackney and Mitchell, 2000)

2. To focus time, resources, and strengths on building vital learning communities in high schools.

Building vital learning communities into the culture and practices of high schools requires a strong commitment to developing and recognizing individual and collective strengths.

The following characteristics are demonstrated by members of an effective learning community as **individuals:**

- **self-directedness**: an ability to take ownership–to seek solutions to problems and to choose positive directions rather than to blame others;

- **ability to distinguish** between circumstances over which they have influence and power and those over which they have no control.
- **courage** to share beliefs, challenge assumptions and traditions, lead, and demonstrate moral commitment and acts of service.
- **commitment to lifelong learning** and a willingness to support personal and collective growth and change.
- **collaboration with others** through information sharing, open dialogue, inclusive practices, and partnerships with other members of the school community.

Successful partnerships are two-way streets where all parties realize they have something to learn. Finding partners and building alliances is a good way to share resources–as airlines and other businesses are discovering. Partnerships also strengthen people's capacity to learn and get better over time by opening them up to divergent viewpoints and honest feedback. (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998)

The following characteristics are demonstrated by members of an effective learning community as a **collective**:

- ***Every member of the community is a learner.***
  In a learning community, everyone is a learner and members contribute to each others' learning. Staff, students and their families and community members are actively engaged, adopting an attitude of lifelong learning; they assume responsibility for supporting others to make everyday learning a reality in their lives.

- ***The learning community has a clear purpose, vision, and goals.***
  Learning communities promote shared planning and responsibility for instruction, assessment, and decision-making processes. The purpose, vision, and goals are developed collaboratively and are continuously evolving. Planning for teaching, learning, and assessment no longer is solely the teacher's responsibility but is shared with students, their families, and the community. All members of the learning community make a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the overall purpose and vision of the school to ensure that quality services are being provided to all students and that families and community members are actively engaged.

A vision becomes the community's road map to the future. It connects dreams and aspirations, offers hope for a different future, and bonds diverse people and their perspectives,... sustaining communal energy and hope. (Wald and Castleberry, 2002)

- ***The learning community values a collaborative culture and nurtures strong, meaningful relationships.***

A collaborative culture within a school focuses energy on developing creative ways to engage staff, students, their families, and community members in working together to improve teaching and learning. Time is spent to create relationships that foster meaningful communication where active listening, dialogue, and debate occurs. Learning communities support all members to reflect upon their practices and upon data-based outcomes to inform changes.

An organization or community can fail to adapt when its people look too hard to their authorities to meet challenges that require changes. Leaders must "get on the balcony" to prevent oneself from becoming "lost on the dance floor." (Heifetz, 2001)

- ***Leadership is shared among participants.***
  Members of the learning community are encouraged to take responsibility for self-management. People are actively working together to respond to their challenging context and to continue improving. They know where they are going, and they have the focus and needed information to get there. An administrator who shares leadership–and thus, power and authority–invites consensus decision making by creating an environment of respect, trust, and risk taking.

- ***Structural conditions support members as a learning community.***
  The effectiveness of a learning community is impacted by structural conditions, such as the use of time, that support shared communication, planning, and reflection among staff, students, families, other human service providers, and the community. Structural conditions contribute to successful collaboration and common outcomes such as student learning and well-being.
  Examples of structural conditions are:
  - groupings small enough to develop a sense of community;
  - well-facilitated large group gatherings;
  - opportunities for integrated planning and implementation of curriculum and services;
  - youth and adult facilitation and leadership opportunities;
  - use of creative forums and mediums to share information; and,
  - flexible scheduling of the school's calendar year, semester, and day.

- ***Human qualities impact the qualities of the learning community.***
  It is important to attend to the human qualities and capacities of each member of the learning community. The beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of members (students, staff, family, and community members) contribute to building a context for continual learning, change, and growth. The learning community benefits

Vision and strategy will get you on the right path. But culture is the only thing that gets you to your goal. Reculturing and capacity building are critical to achieving improvements and change. (Fullan, Fall Discussions, Saskatchewan Learning, 2002)

> [Support] those who raise hard questions and generate distress–people who point to the internal contradictions of the organization or community. These individuals often will have latitude to provoke rethinking that authorities do not have. (Heifetz, 2001)

from inherent and learned competencies of its membership such as the capacity to accept and provide feedback; demonstrate respect and trust; develop positive and caring relationships; form meaningful partnerships with others; respond to conflict, and recognize opportunities for self-determination, choice, collaboration, and leadership.

3. To engage in positive opportunities as adaptive leaders and members of a strong learning community.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership supports school communities to expand and strengthen opportunities as learning communities. Adaptive leaders within learning communities are dedicated to building more capacity and leadership among all.

The following comparison demonstrates the critical link between adaptive leadership and strong learning communities.

Traditional Leaders
- Control and limit sharing of information.
- Attend majority of professional development exchanges.
- Are central and dominant in decision making.

Adaptive Leaders
- Share information.
- Encourage skill development among all members.
- Invite others to influence and share decision making.

Adaptive leaders do not believe in maintaining control over key ingredients of a learning community. Instead, adaptive leaders believe that by expanding and strengthening the capacities and power of all learning community members, the benefits realized will be farther reaching.

Learning Community Benefits:

> Creating the practices, policies, and structures for high schools as communities of learning means changing how we as educators think about our students–what we believe they deserve and are capable of achieving. These are the beginnings of real transformation.
> (Nieto, 1994)

For students
Students experience the satisfaction of self-reinforcement when adults respond to student interests and needs by facilitating opportunities for students to learn about negotiating and setting goals, and monitoring their own performance. (Housego,1999). Together youth and adults expand previous knowledge by exploring youth engagement self-directed learning practices that represent a change from traditional approaches and structures.

For educators
Educators who feel supported to continue their own learning are more committed and effective. Supports such as teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, reflective dialogue, and expanded professional roles increase educators' effectiveness in meeting students' needs. Educators whose own needs are being met are more likely to adopt new approaches and are also more likely to stay within the profession. When educators have opportunities for collaborative inquiry and the learning related to it, they are able to develop and to share a body of wisdom gleaned from their experience. (Darling-Hammond, 1997)

For families and communities
Family and community members engaged in the learning community have opportunities to become colearners and coteachers (Lambert, 2003). These opportunities lead to relationships and partnerships dedicated to achieving common outcomes for children, youth, family, and community members. This rich exchange can lead to outcomes that could not be achieved in isolation. Similar to the growth and changes experienced by teachers and students, these opportunities also support family and community members to affirm strengths, pursue interests, and develop more fully as individuals.

> Professional development works best when it is part of a wider process of school development, gradually drawing in more teachers, kids, parents, administrators, and community members.
> (Daniels et al., 2001)

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue on how to create the culture and structures within high schools to support and to facilitate the presence of vibrant learning communities among staff, students, family, and community members. (Additional reflective questions can be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth*, 2001)

To renew high school leadership to better include all students, their families, and community members in constructive change, collective learning, and shared purpose.

- *In what ways are staff, students, family, and community members currently involved in high school leadership? How might more meaningful involvement be encouraged and supported? How can we build on existing leadership opportunities within our school and our community? What current leadership and decision-making processes and structures need to be adapted to support multiple opportunities for involvement and developing leadership capacities?*

To focus time, resources and strengths on building vital learning communities in high schools.

- *What characteristics of a learning community already exist within our school? What characteristics need to be developed? How can individuals be supported to develop their skills as members of a learning community? How can we support members as a collective to be a learning community? How will these changes strengthen our school community?*

To engage in positive opportunities as adaptive leaders and members of a strong learning community.

- *What learning communities currently exist within our school? What is their role? How can staff be creative in finding innovative ways to work together to advance the vision of a learning community? In what ways can we adapt these learning communities to include students? families? community members? What resources support our learning communities? What other resources might we share, access, or utilize?*

Recommended Resources and Supports

Daniels, H., Bizar, M., & Zemelman, S. (2001) *Rethinking high school.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Darling Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

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Kinsley, C.W., & McPherson, K. (1995). *Enriching the curriculum through service learning.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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Sackney, L. & Mitchell, C. (2000). *Profound improvement: Building capacity for a learning community.* The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Sergiovanni, T. (1994). *Building community in schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Housego, B.E.J. (1999, Spring). Outreach schools: An educational innovation. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research. XLV(1)*, 85-101

McDonald, J. (1992). *Teaching: Making sense of an uncertain craft.* New York: Teachers' College Press.

Wald, P. J., & Castleberry, M. S. (2002). *Educators as learners: Creating a professional learning community in your school.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

AID 1

Effective Practice 6:

Improving Outcomes by Sharing Results

Assessment for Learning

All evaluations depend on the judgements of individuals. In order for those judgements to be as useful as possible, the information on which the judgements are based should be as beneficial as possible. The information collected and interpreted, as part of the assessment for learning process, should be of value to school division and school personnel, students, families and community members.

Challenge:

To share responsibility for current and desired outcomes in student learning and well-being for all, by engaging together as staff, students, family and community members in assessment opportunities that inform improvement and enhance opportunities for learning.

Some Key Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities are presented in circular fashion to invite members of high school communities to engage in an assessment cycle that supports collaborative planning, effective actions, and continuous progress.

1. Reflect upon strengths and limitations related to assessment–to engage or re-engage as learners regarding assessment.
2. Create a climate and culture for engaging with others in assessment opportunities as learning opportunities.
3. Develop an assessment plan or "map" that communicates, aligns, and supports day-to-day assessment capacities and practices.
4. Engage in assessment "spot checks" to determine whether incremental actions taken towards intended outcomes require "shifting direction" or "staying on course".
5. Review, evaluate and share results, celebrate milestones, and move forward informed by the data and results evident through assessment practices.

Each time the assessment cycle is repeated, steps 1 and 2 contribute to a strong foundation; increased energy, planning, and opportunities for improvement can be invested through steps 3 to 5.

Youth Quote

I think goals should be set in High School. Not only by students but teachers also. The teachers could make a goal like they want to pass every student with a 70% average or above, so they'd (support) make the student get a mark like that. The students need to set goals also, like passing with a 70% average or playing lots of sports and sticking to it all year. - Cody, Age 16.

Some Goals should be set in high school. Goals such as what you would like to do or be when you graduate should be thought about and in ways be planned out. ... There is no better person to set your goals than yourself. - Chandi - Age 16

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment (the collection of information to increase knowledge), *evaluation* (interpreting the information/data, placing value, and making judgements), and *application* (action taken based on information collected and knowledge gained) are integral to student learning and well-being.

As knowledge about an individual student increases, a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to student well-being and learning develops. This understanding can assist educators to more effectively meet individual student needs and support learning.

Additional data and perspectives emerge when assessment practices shift from collecting information and gaining knowledge about individual students to include collecting information and gaining knowledge about students' families, communities, programs and systems (school, classroom, other service systems, and environments that students experience). Understanding from these perspectives can also inform decisions and actions aimed at improving circumstances that impact learning and well-being for the students as a collective.

A comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to student learning and well-being (and other desired outcomes) cannot occur when a few engage in a single assessment and evaluation initiative. A comprehensive understanding is developed by working together through a variety of initiatives that gather data, monitor progress, and create opportunities to reflect upon shared results.

The following roles and responsibilities encourage the creation of assessment opportunities and data-guided decisions that support improved outcomes for students and other members of their school community.

1. Reflect upon strengths and limitations related to assessment–to engage or re-engage as learners regarding assessment.

A principal reflected on his experience and concern about "teacher isolation." He observed that teachers in his school did much of their work in isolation and as a result there were pockets of excellence in performance and student learning, but overall school-wide performance continued to be "abysmal". This barrier, and some others, stood in the way of achieving the quality of outcomes this school intended to achieve. Recognizing this as an issue to explore was the first step towards school-wide improvement and success. Staff members were asked to engage in dialogue about school results and a turning point in the discussion occurred when a staff member pleaded "no more lone ranger!" and asked for understanding and support from colleagues. The passion and leadership of this teacher contributed to engaging others in a process of improvement that set out to ensure all students were provided "necessary building blocks" for learning achievement. This teacher asked for help from others to work together to ensure that they would never again see a student "experience humiliation by a test for which they were poorly prepared." For this school, the journey to engage as learners regarding assessment began. In order to make improvements and achieve the results they desired, they had to first examine and study their current results, and assess the current behaviours, practices, and processes they engaged in. (Marshall, 2003)

Benefits of shared assessment opportunities:

- reduce isolation and invite school community members to support one another to achieve;
- renew the focus on common and desired outcomes;
- address limitations and affirm strengths, as individuals and as a collective;
- seek understanding and knowledge from a variety of sources and perspectives;
- foster personal and professional growth;
- affirm shared responsibilities for achieving common outcomes such as improvement in student learning and well-being;

> Much depends on our willingness to engage rather than avoid such issues and opportunities. And time does matter. Right now, the life chances of many thousands of children hang on the actions we take. Their options, and their ability to participate fully in the life of their communities depend on how soon and how vigorously we implement best methods.
> (Schmoker 2001)

- value both mistakes and successes as learning opportunities;
- create a culture and climate for continuous improvement and growth;
- increase opportunities to learn and succeed; and,
- invite planning, efficiency, and creativity through:
    - a variety of assessment strategies that support inclusion and facilitate shared responsibility for achievement among administrators, school staff, human service partners, students, family and community members;
    - enhanced assessment literacy–strengthened capacity to use data to inform planning and decision making and effectively guide efforts; and,
    - opportunities for renewal and challenge.

Assessment Literacy

Reliable data and evidence provide the foundation for the continuous process of reflection, inquiry, dialogue, and networking that are characteristic of a learning community, and critical to continual personal and professional growth, change and improvement. Educators and other members of the school community benefit from developing assessment literacy skills, knowledge and the capacity to:

- differentiate varied purposes and functions of assessments–(assessments at different levels serve unique purposes–individual or system-wide);
- develop an ethical understanding of the principles of validity, fairness, authenticity, and reliability for ensuring appropriate assessment decisions;
- engage in regular self-assessment;
- collaborate with others to appropriately use different types of assessment instruments and processes (observations, tests, portfolios, performance assessments, mapping tools, surveys, student and community profiles, rubrics);
- examine assessment data and make sense of it;
- report and share results with various high school members who have an impact on student learning and well-being;
- engage in dialogue with others to collaboratively improve outcomes based on results (dialogue about collective student learning outcomes); and,
- use the data to affect changes in teaching and learning; services and contributions to school and community outcomes.

School reform should be driven by generation of the evidence. You should not even begin the school year until you know the results of your work from the previous year. (Richardson, 1997, p.1 in Schmoker 2001)

Gathering information and contributing to achievement of outcomes by increasing knowledge and understanding (assessment and evaluation) strengthens teaching and learning process.

Participating in assessment and evaluation activities strengthens opportunities to realize

School^{PLUS}. School administrators and teachers play a leadership role in accountability for the education system. This responsibility is bound up in the dynamic that many others affect and share accountability for achieving learning excellence and well-being. Individual members of school communities are challenged to acquire and strengthen assessment skills and to be accountable to self and to others by measuring "our performance compared to our plan" and "our performance compared to our potential". (De Pree 1997)

2. Create a climate and culture for engaging with others in assessment opportunities as learning opportunities.

Beliefs and Assumptions

When school administrators and school staff take an active role in leading and shaping positive beliefs and values for their school community they shape opportunities for positive outcomes. (Willms 2003).

There are four underlying assumptions related to assessment that high school staff can model for other members (education and human service colleagues, students, family, and community members). These four critical beliefs are:

- All Youth Can Learn
- Schools Can Make a Difference in Student Learning and Well-being
- Schools Can Continuously Improve
- Relationships of Respect and Trust are Key to School Improvement

Practices, policies, and structures in high schools convey beliefs and assumptions. The practice of measuring student achievement in high school is traditionally done by testing a student, usually by written examinations in specific subject areas. This is often an appropriate and valid assessment option to gather data and report on student learning in a specific subject area. The four critical beliefs above can further be demonstrated when this accepted *assessment of learning* practice is complemented by additional *assessment for learning* opportunities.

Assessment for Learning

When shared appropriately, information gained from assessment initiatives can be used to promote increased student learning instead of being used only as a summative measure of student learning. Assessment for learning is a "means to end" versus only an "end" result.

The following questions invite members of high schools to explore their assessment beliefs and assessment options.

Research on outcomes for youth and organizations has provided broad evidence of the benefits of youth participation. Some promising evidence about youth outcomes stems from research on student motivation in classrooms, in which participation in decision-making has been correlated with greater effort, intrinsic interest, and more effective learning strategies. (Ames, 1992)

- In order to inform and engage students in achieving learning goals, can students be better included in self-assessment activities and collective assessment activities?
- How can school staff be supported to engage in assessment and data-guided decision making with others to improve student learning and well-being? New assessment and implementation practices may require some risk-taking. Are supports and safety nets in place to encourage critical inquiry, networking, and dialogue about effective practices based upon shared experiences and results?
- Traditionally high school staffs are organized by the subjects they teach. How might assessment practices be modified if the structure of a high school is organized around alternative staff functions which also support student learning and well-being such as home room structures, mentor networks?
- Can collaborative and alternative assessment initiatives with others (students, colleagues, family, and community members) be used to offer new knowledge, affirm diverse ways of learning and knowing, increase understanding, and further inform continuous improvement in teaching and learning and opportunities for well-being?
- Can achieving common outcomes be better facilitated and shared with students, families and community by sharing results from current assessments and adapting assessment approaches to include and engage the commitment of others in future assessment opportunities?

Past reliance on subject structures as a means of organizing secondary schools has often resulted in images based on the subject as opposed to creating images that challenge that box. (Hannay & Ross, 2001).

3. Develop an assessment plan or 'map' that communicates, aligns, and supports day-to-day assessment capacities and practices.

When assessment is designed to occur hand-in-hand with instruction, learning processes, or other support and service interactions, "good intentions described in vision statements" can become "meaningful improvement targets" (Schmoker, 2001).

For example, teachers and students need to be confident that curriculum goals and curriculum implementation will align with the assessments used to measure a student's understanding and mastery of the curriculum content taught. Similarly, all members of the learning community need to be confident that their contributions align with programs, initiatives, and services put in place to

achieve school-community goals.

Benefits of assessment plans:

- clear communication of expectations and tasks–an opportunity to "design both a road map and a treasure map–giving both clear direction and room for creative contributions" (De Pree, 1997);
- continued opportunities to focus on outcomes–affirming and reinforcing the purpose behind contributions and actions;
- opportunity for members to understand how others support their role and create conditions for improved student learning and well-being–connecting responsibilities and contributions of diverse school community members;
- a climate for continued learning and exploration of good assessment practices;
- "real alignment between actions and intended outcomes" (Schmoker, 2001);
- built-in assessment processes and time; assuring that time is spent to look at what students are learning or at systems and supports to learning and well-being (classroom, school, other services) as data to inform and identify continued actions toward outcomes;
- a demonstration of "means" and "ends" interacting that invites versus tries to control members' participation and commitment to school community improvement and growth (Hannay and Ross, 2001); and,
- assurance to members that assessment tools used actually align with goals and offer an authentic indication of progress towards goals or goal achievement.

"Our plans need to be good maps - telling us not where to go but how to make connections. A good (annual) plan tells everyone in the group how to make connections so that we can move on with our work. Simple discussion together - of the future, of the context in which we serve, of our strengths and resources and weaknesses - can be measured. How well do we discuss who we are and who we intend to be? You know, applying a yardstick to something really can give you a wonderful new insight as to what counts."
(De Pree, 1997)

4. Engage in assessment "spot checks" to determine whether incremental actions taken towards intended outcomes require "shifting direction" or "staying on course".

Data from assessments offer information that enables staff, students, and others to establish targets, affirm current strategies and directions, assess progress toward goals, invite self-correction or other changes. When using assessment data for this purpose it is important to remember that one assessment does not tell the whole story; different assessment processes serve different purposes. By becoming familiar with assessment and the adequacy of assessment results there is an opportunity to improve practices and strategies as staff members, students, and others who support young people in learning and life success.

By sharing responsibilities for keeping an eye on the target(s) and having processes for checking in with oneself and with others as teachers, staff, students, family, and community members, it is possible to achieve individual and collective dreams. Through collaborative planning, persistence, and monitoring practices, proactive versus reactive opportunities emerge and knowledge and understanding increases.

By developing assessment spot checks that revisit alignment of actions with intended outcomes there is an opportunity to reduce challenges and difficulties as soon as possible and to increase conditions and factors that contribute to successful learning and well-being. (Senge, 1994)

A "power learning cycle" (is a strategy) in which teacher teams use data from quarterly assessments to track the percentage of students achieving proficiency, focus on key areas of weakness, and invent new strategies to boost achievement in the next nine-week cycle. I am convinced that, when teachers work this way (which is possible only when a number of other factors related to school's organization and culture are present), student achievement will soar. (Marshall, 2003)

5. **To review, evaluate and share results, celebrate milestones, and move forward informed by the data and results evident through assessment practices.**

Assessment is a key ingredient to empowering high schools as *communities of learning* and *communities of support*. Assessments provide snapshots of performance and practice, and the greater the number of snapshots the more comprehensive our knowledge, understanding and ability to fulfill a commitment to developing high school communities that support and learn alongside young people as they strive to achieve life goals. By sharing results and celebrating milestones, high schools can strive to improve outcomes for *every* student.

Successful schools are distinguished by a dynamic and continuous process of inquiry that staff and students engage in together. This contrasts with a traditional focus on the content of a particular innovation. Success comes from the search for shared goals and fostering of collective thinking, used to guide curriculum and decision making, engendering the vitality, willingness to change, and conviction to continue that changed the life of their schools. (Darling-Hammond, 1997)

Questions for Reflection

The following questions are posed to support reflection and dialogue about engaging in an assessment cycle that supports and facilitates collaborative opportunities for continuous improvement in high schools. (Additional reflective questions can be explored in *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth*, 2001)

Reflect upon strengths and limitations related to assessment; to engage or re-engage as learners regarding assessment.

- What types of assessments take place in your school community now? Are results from these assessment practices shared with others? Is time scheduled/provided for assessment? Who participates in the design and implementation of these assessments? How do these practices contribute to improving individual student learning? student well-being? school community improvement? Are there other assessment possibilities or interests to explore?

Create a climate and culture for engaging with others in assessment opportunities as learning opportunities.

- What has been a positive assessment experience? How was this experience a learning experience? How are students engaged in the cycle of assessment? How are families, community, or human service partners engaged in assessment opportunities focused on shared outcomes? Have staff and other members of the high school been involved in learning opportunities related to assessment?

Develop an assessment plan or "map" that communicates, aligns, and supports day-to-day assessment capacities and practices.

- How do staff, students, and other members of the high school set goals? How are expectations communicated to members of the high school? What beliefs guide the expectations? Are opportunities to engage in assessment to monitor progress towards individual and collective goals built into current planning processes? Could current assessment planning and practices be strengthened and how?

Engage in assessment "spot checks" to determine whether incremental actions taken towards intended outcomes require "shifting direction" or "staying on course".

- Do staff, students, and other high school members spend time together through the school day, semester, or year to reflect and align actions with intended outcomes? Do members engage in processes to ensure that actions and desired goals are complementary and not contradictory?

Review, evaluate and share results, celebrate milestones, and move forward informed by the data and results evident through assessment practices.

- How is assessment data shared? Does this data help to inform future decisions and directions taken by staff, students, and other members? When milestones are achieved, how are they celebrated? Are student learning and school community results from the previous school year explored to inform decisions and plans for the next year?

Recommended Resources and Supports

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Appendix A

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Saskatchewan Learning. http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/partner_aboriginal/aboriginal_ed/abindex.shtml Aboriginal Education Unit

Saskatchewan Learning. http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/children_services/childservindex.shtml Children's Services and Programs Branch

Role of the School Task Force Recommendations: In Relation to This Policy and Program Framework

Appendix B

For further information relating to the following Recommendations from the Role of School Task Force please refer to:

SCHOOL^{PLUS} A Vision for Children and Youth
Final Report to the Minister of Education Government of Saskatchewan
Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School

Prepared by
Dr. Michael Tymchak, Chair and the Saskatchewan Instructional Development & Research Unit (SIDRU)
February 28, 2001

The following table reflects the relationship between issues identified in the Role of School Task Force Final Report (2001) and the key roles and responsibilities highlighted in this Policy and Program Framework.

Effective Practice 1: Strategies to Engage All Youth Within High Schools - *Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention*

Challenge: To develop new strategies to engage ALL youth more meaningfully within the school environment.

Role of School Task Force Report: *Educators need to effectively include students' voices in creating policy, making decisions and enacting them.* (p. 77, pp. 106 -107)

Role of School Task Force Final Report	Final Report Page #	Refer to Framework Page #
That the participation and involvement of students become a cornerstone of both school policy and its application.	77	19-21
That a variety of opportunities and venues be created in high schools and middle years settings for soliciting the student voice, including conducting surveys and creating focus groups, and that the canvassing of such opinion be regarded as a vital component of needs assessment and high school reform.	119	21
That all Saskatchewan high schools embrace a school policy assessment cycle that includes canvassing student opinion on at least an annual basis, and reflection by staff on feedback, with a view to modifying school policy and practice.	119	22

Effective Practice 2: Rethinking Teaching and Learning - *Responsive Curriculum and Instruction*

Challenge: To rethink teaching and learning.

Role of School Task Force Report: *High schools will become sites for a range of programs to meet a variety of needs rather than being identified by a standard program with a number of "alternatives". (pp.138-139)*

Teachers are strategically positioned to profoundly influence students. Teachers will need to: • be provided with opportunities to become the best individuals society has to offer the teaching profession. • possess the highest qualifications possible for their role in the profession. • have ready access to university programs at the pre-service and in-service levels that enhance their teaching by integrating theory and practice. • be strongly oriented to the development of students as persons.	139	27
Teachers will increasingly need to: • involve students in identifying their educational goals, learning experiences, and assessment processes in order to facilitate a broader range of individualized programs	138-139	28

Effective Practice 2 Continued

Role of School Task Force Final Report	Final Report Page #	Refer to Framework Page #
Teachers will increasingly need to: • work with students in a variety of programs in different settings such as community settings and instructional technology environments. • use the technology available to enhance student learning. • assess school experiences to give credit for partial completion of classes.	138-139	28-31
That the Saskatchewan education community promote a greater diversity of high schools and high school programs in the province.	98	31-32
Teachers will increasingly need to: • be team members with others in the development of policies and programs to meet students' needs. • become accustomed to a more flexible structure in terms of school day, week, and year. • work inclusively with a wider range of student life-styles and interests.	138	33
That through increased cooperation between Saskatchewan Education, Post Secondary Education and Skills Training, and Social Services, "Retrieval" programs of various kinds be encouraged, developed, and funded as part of the Community High School initiative.	99	33-34

Effective Practice 3: Enhancing the Culture and Climate of High Schools - *A Caring and Respectful School Environment*

Challenge: To build a caring and respectful community within high schools that is more inviting to all students, families, and community.

Role of School Task Force Report: *The goals of public education and Evergreen Core Curriculum have reshaped and expanded the teacher's role to address a broader range of child and youth needs. Increased attention to students' social and personal development as well as the traditional academic development function is required. (p. 138)*

Teachers will need to: • exercise more sophisticated human relations skills with a wider variety of adults involved in school programs. • participate in community development by contributing expertise related to team building, goal setting, action planning, and evaluation to the local community.	139	40

Effective Practice 3 cont'd		
Role of School Task Force Final Report	**Final Report Page #**	**Refer to Framework Page #**
Teachers will need to: • recognize a broad range of child/youth needs. • know the resources available for a wide range of child/youth needs, and refer students to appropriate resources.	139	40-41
That the design of the variety of high schools be driven by the learning needs of their targeted student population, and that multiple exit outcomes be recognized, reflecting the fact that students do not share common post-high-school aspirations. That a "college campus" approach be taken in Grades 11 and 12, with attendance monitored in relation to classes (not "spares"). Teachers will need to: • use community resources for student learning both in and outside of the school site. • become accustomed to a more flexible structure in terms of the school day, week, and year.	98 99 138-139	42
Teachers will increasingly need to: • work with older students in a decreasingly custodial environment. • function as facilitators of learning by helping students access resources to accomplish learning tasks appropriate to their development.	138-139	42-43
Teachers will need to: • play an advocacy role for children and youth to promote their interests. • participate as a team member along with parents, community, and other human service providers in the school environment. • provide students with security, hope, and inspiration, enabling them to live well with one another.	139	44

Effective Practice 4: Reaching Out to Families and Community - *Authentic Partnerships*
Challenge: To nurture strong relationships with families and community members and to build integrated partnerships that are reciprocal and help to create a supportive, stimulating learning environment.

Role of School Task Force Report: *Generally speaking the teacher of tomorrow needs to be much more aware of the wide range of professional human services than is typically covered in undergraduate teacher education programs. There is need for enhanced awareness of the principles of community development, an appreciation for the role of parents as active participants in their children's education, and the contribution to school that can be made by non-governmental, community-based organizations. (p. 76)*

Role of School Task Force Final Report	Final Report Page #	Refer to Framework Page #
The educational community should promote: • a concept of teacher professionalism that includes parents, and other professional and community resources, as important partners for schools and teachers. • the allocation of time, effort, and resources to support the partnership with parents through enhanced coordination between the school and the community, and through the provision of professional development opportunities designed to equip parents for their role in supporting the learning communities of their children.	79, 127	49
That the role of parents as active participants in the education of their children be affirmed and promoted by the Saskatchewan education community.	79	49-50
That avenues be explored that might permit the development of school-community cooperatives and joint ventures that will provide entrepreneurial labs and co-op work experiences for students and services for communities.	127	50-51
That the Saskatchewan educational partners and other agencies (governmental and non-governmental) explore possible funding arrangements for school-community cooperatives.	108	52

Effective Practice 5: Expanding and Strengthening as Learning Communities - *Adaptive Leadership*

Challenge: To create the culture, structures, and processes within high schools to support, facilitate, and lead vibrant learning communities among staff, students, their families, and community members.

Role of School Task Force Report: *Teaching is complex. In a time of increasing knowledge and unending change, teachers need to be lifelong learners and members of their own learning communities. A considerable part of a teacher's day is not in the classroom working directly with students. Schools in the School^{PLUS} environment will continue to diversify programs to meet a broader range of student needs. (p. 76)*

Role of School Task Force Final Report	Final Report Page #	Refer to Framework Page #
The educational community should promote: • a concept of school administration that recognizes the value of parents and other professional and community resources for the school, and that the values and skills of power sharing, negotiation and mediation be supported and nurtured.	119	56-57
Teachers require the following support to deal with a greater range of student needs: • reduced class sizes that allow teachers to attend to personal and social development needs (in addition to academic needs) of students with a broader range of learning needs. • consultation time as part of the work day to collaborate and consult with peers, parents, students and other agencies. • help of nonprofessionals with non-teaching custodial functions.	139	58-60
Teachers' professional development needs have expanded, and they continually require: • professional development related to the personal and social development needs of children/youth to complement the teacher's academic and pedagogical expertise • in-service with teaching approaches that equip students to direct their own learning, to learn in cooperation with others and to learn from a variety of resources available • support to actualize the Core Curriculum, particularly the Adaptive Dimension.	138	61-62
There is a real need for high schools to reflect on their programs and program delivery modes from the point of view of the changing character and needs of their students. There also needs to be support from school division offices for experimentation. If we are in changing times, then our school responses do not need to be viewed as carved in stone.	97	

Effective Practice 6: Improving Outcomes by Sharing Results - *Assessment for Learning*
Challenge: To share responsibility for current and desired outcomes in student learning and well-being for all, by engaging together as staff, students, family, and community members in assessment opportunities that inform improvement and enhance opportunities for learning.

Role of School Task Force Report: *This coordination calls for an understanding of a wide range of professional and community-based services, power-sharing, negotiation and mediation skills, sophisticated interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to multi-task and create a collaborative team-work environment. (p. 75)*

Role of School Task Force Final Report	Final Report Page #	Refer to Framework Page #
We need to promote the notion that schools are learning organizations that effect and monitor change in a regular and ongoing manner. A cycle that includes assessment of the school program(s), identification of problem areas, gathering further information, attempting change, monitoring the results, reviewing and reassessing the strategy, needs to become the natural way of doing business in today's high schools. In today's environment there will simply not be one "best way" that stands out; there will be numerous possible organizational responses, one or two of which are worth trying (for a while). There are issues that need to be addressed, problems that need to be solved, and change possibilities that need to be attempted; but all of this needs to be approached with the attitude of "experimenting", of "attempting" and "reviewing", rather than in the spirit of definitive long term solutions. A new attitude and culture needs to be promoted in secondary education that is risk taking, that does not see making mistakes as organizationally fatal; that believes we can learn from mistakes, with the recognition that they are essential to a healthy institutional culture and the responsive learning organization.	97 97	66-73
Parents and primary caregivers have a vital interest in children and this interest needs to be nurtured and cultivated. A positive, active participant role for parents can be fostered by schools in the recognition that the education of children is a shared responsibility. The shared responsibility approach provides a supportive context in which the teacher's role and expertise can flourish. A mutually supportive culture is more likely to be fostered where a genuine effort is made by the school to involve parents meaningfully in the child's education.	97	66-73